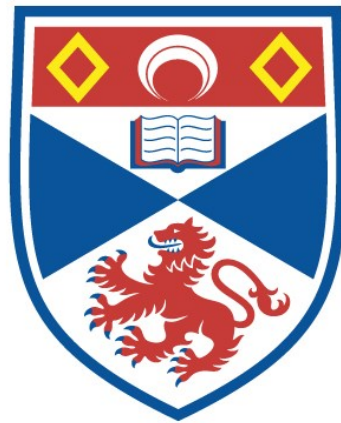


**EXAMPLE AND AUTHORITY IN THE NARRATIVE
REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN, AS ILLUSTRATED IN
SELECTED WRITINGS OF CHRISTINE DE PIZAN AND
MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE**

Alison J. Ramsay

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



1999

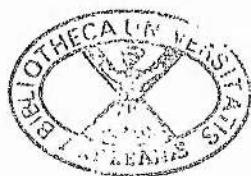
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**ALISON J. RAMSAY
UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
Ph.D. THESIS
MAY, 1999**



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of authority and example in the narrative representation of women in selected writings of Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre. In this thesis, it is shown that these two women writers reject the universalised notion of Woman and strive to create an alternative, not oppositional, view of the female sex. By working within established literary parameters, adopting authority from earlier works and adapting this rhetorical tool, firstly by editing or altering their sources and, secondly by incorporating the authority of personal experience into their narratives, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre establish their own *auctoritas*. Similarly, the rhetorical device of example is appropriated and modified, again through a subtle process of editing and revision and by the self-inscription of the authors into their *exempla*. Through their use of authority and example, these women writers expose the notion of Woman as flawed and, in so doing, undermine the validity of the codes of conduct propounded for women by the canon. This thesis contends that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre defy the patristic uni-polar model of human sexuality by adopting a bi-polar model, deliberately placing the prevailing notion of Woman at the opposite, and therefore negative, pole to Man. Thereafter, through their constant rejection of universalising generalisation, they create a neutral space between the poles of Man and Woman wherein women are shown capable of active participation in a society. This thesis is undertaken from the perspective of a woman('s) historian and literary analyst, making use of a new historicist and gender-based theoretical analysis of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, the *Livre des Trois Vertus* and the *Heptaméron* situated within an appropriate historical context. This thesis is the first comprehensive comparative study of the rhetorical devices used by these two women authors in their narrative representation of women.

I, Alison Janet Ramsay, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a second year research student in September, 1997 and as a second year candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in September, 1997; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1997 and 1999.

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INTRODUCTION

For the twentieth-century scholar, an examination of the representation of women by women writers presents several inherently problematic areas. This introduction proposes to identify these areas and elucidate their more complex elements. Possible solutions to these problem areas will be proposed and an analytical strategy defined.

From the outset, this thesis must make explicit any scholastic bias, stance or objective. It is not the purpose of this study to produce a feminist polemic, but to approach the material under examination as a woman('s) historian and literary analyst, seeking to understand the narrative representation of women by women writers. The approach taken may therefore be defined broadly as that of an *histoire des mentalités*. This thesis proposes to examine the subtle manipulation by two women writers of the codes of conduct propounded for women by the canon. Where the term Canon (upper case) is used in this thesis, it refers to works of exclusively ecclesiastical origin. Where the word canon is employed, it should be taken to include both ecclesiastical and secular works. It will be shown that the women writers under examination adopted the established rhetorical devices of example and authority, and adapted them to a different end, in order to strive for a more moderate view of women.

It will be shown that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre seek to undermine the validity of canonical pronouncements on the nature of Woman and, by extension, the codes of conduct propounded for her. We will see that these women writers reject the notion of Woman as an erroneous universalisation, established in Antiquity and reinforced by successive centuries of misogynist writing. Throughout this thesis, therefore, the term Woman (upper case) will be used to denote the prevailing universalised image of the female sex.

It will be shown that, by working within accepted literary parameters, in the first instance these women writers give their arguments greater validity, thereafter using several different types of authority to establish their credibility. From this

position, these women writers strive to create, without conflict, an alternative but not oppositional view of women, based upon this refusal to accept universalising generalisations. These women writers insist that not all women are alike and concede the existence of evil women. Similarly, these women writers refrain from making universal declarations about the nature of men. It will be shown that these women writers defy the patristic and canonical uni-polar notion of Woman as imperfect Man by deliberately setting Woman up as the opposite pole to Man. We will contend that they do so in the knowledge that, if Man is the positive pole, Woman will necessarily be regarded negatively. Concession precedes progression, however: by installing Woman as the opposite pole to Man, by conceding the existence of immoral men *and* women, these women writers create a middle ground between the two poles. Ultimately, these women writers strive to create a more realistic foundation of acknowledged opinion about the female sex upon which to build.

We will contend that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre wished to expose the double standards at work in the male-dominated societies of their lifetimes. By precluding the existence of Woman as a universal being, they undermined the validity of a code of conduct propounded for her by the canon and, in so doing, they exposed the fragility of the established behavioural and moral system created by centuries of misogynist thinking and reinforced by the patristic writers. Ascetics, living in exclusion from society, laid down the code for women. Men in society expected women to lay the code aside for them. It will be seen that these women writers reveal an alternative view of women and an alternative lifestyle for women, based upon an acceptance of human frailty. Having established their credibility as writers through the adoption of authority, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre use example as a didactic tool, offering the means for women to participate actively in society, prior to sublimating themselves in God. These women writers strive constantly to show an alternative argument, authority or example. By creating an alternative, not oppositional, view of women these writers give their arguments the strength to survive the assault of biased universalisations from 'anti-feminist' writers.

We shall use the terms 'feminist' and 'anti-feminist' in this thesis to denote the schools of thought and writing to be examined in Chapter One. Where these terms are not enclosed within inverted commas, they may be accepted as being encoded with their twentieth-century connotations. This thesis intends to show that the 'radical' nature of the texts under examination lies in fact that they are not radical in any modern sense of the word; they are reasonable, reasoned discourses working within a patriarchal literature to provide a *modus vivendi* for women in a patriarchal society. That they attempt at all to redress the balance of society in women's favour might be seen as innovative, but to claim these women writers as radical feminists is to fall into anachronism, as will be discussed in the Conclusion.

This thesis grounds itself within an appropriate socio-historic context: in order to understand how, as is our contention, these two women writers worked within the established parameters of literary convention to show the notion of a universalised Woman to be flawed, we must first understand both the modes of literary expression and the prevailing notion of Woman. To that end Chapter One provides an historical foundation for this thesis by discussing the origins and development of the image of Woman over the centuries in order to illustrate the weight of canonical orthodoxy. As Gerda Lerner notes 'more remarkable than Aristotle's misogynis[m] is the fact that his assumptions remained virtually unchallenged and endlessly repeated for nearly two thousand years'.¹ We may better appreciate the difficulties faced by these women writers in attempting to reveal this view of Woman as flawed if we fully understand the monolithic stature of the notion of Woman. Similarly, we must first have a basic understanding of accepted literary techniques during the period in question if we hope to offer a critical appraisal of the ways in which they were adopted and adapted by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre. This thesis must take into account the subordinate place of women in society in order to comprehend adequately the achievements of these writers; firstly as women writing from within patriarchal society and, secondly, as participants in the *querelle des femmes*. The term *querelle*

¹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 6.

des femmes will be employed as a blanket term to refer to all polemical works which engage in debate upon the nature of Woman and which fall broadly within the sphere of this thesis.

Situating Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre within an appropriate historical background presents difficulties for the scholar because of the influence of the feminist movement and the growing use of theory in the field of women's history. Women('s) historians and feminist critics have found it inherently problematic to define women's history because of the patriarchal nature of society and scholasticism. Women have, until relatively recently, been excluded from the academic canon, both as subjects of scholarly activity and as scholars. As Gerda Lerner notes 'women [...] are the majority now and always have been at least half of humanity, and [...] their subjection to patriarchal institutions antedates all other oppression and has outlasted all economic and social changes in recorded history'.² Inescapably, however, 'history' is what Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn describe as traditionally having been 'a record of male experience, written by men from a male perspective'.³ The burgeoning field of women's history has sought therefore, as Joan Kelly defines it 'to restore women to history and to restore our history to women'.⁴ Given the exceptionally small numbers of men writing in the fields of women's history and feminist criticism it is tempting, if exclusivist, to infer from this a consensus that it takes a woman to write women's history. If, however, the only valid female history is that generated by a female scholar, does that not invalidate male-generated history as a basis for study? We do not subscribe to this view: given the relatively small (although steadily increasing) number of texts which engage specifically with women's lives during the period in question, we have made use of such information as is available, regardless of the gender of its author. If the only facts available are those inscribed by men, the woman('s) historian must take care not to rewrite women's history: We shall accept

² Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective', in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and critical Essays* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 357-67 (p.360).

³ *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. by Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 12.

⁴ Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.1.

such data as exist as a basis for argument/ interpretation, not as masculinist 'canon fodder'.

This thesis will utilise available historical evidence as a basis from which to make informed conjecture, examining the representation of women in this period, as reflected through the medium of literature and not to the exclusion of male-generated history. One of the most common misconceptions arising out of the field of women's history seems to be the overwhelming urge to see the woman of history as a victim, the oppressed slave of a patriarchal society. That earlier societies were patriarchal is beyond dispute, but revisionist history has been responsible for condemning women to the status of cognisant victim, an assumption born out of twentieth-century awareness of the inequality of the sexes. We would contend that the average woman, whether or not she resented her lot, was ill-equipped to contest it, given the weight of canonical orthodoxy on the nature of Woman and the rigid behavioural codes prescribed by the Church and by courtesy literature. As Lerner states 'it is far more useful to deal with the question of victimization as one aspect of women's history, but never to regard it as the *central* aspect of women's history'.⁵ We intend to show in Chapters Two and Three that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre, by exposing the notion of Woman as inaccurate, revealed by extension that the codes of conduct propounded for that Woman were also flawed. By using the established rhetorical devices of example and authority, these writers revealed the potential in women for active participation in society.

All criticism is by its nature subjective, but the twentieth-century critic must guard against the desire to project a feminist agenda onto an earlier work, unless evidence of a feminist bias can be found in the text. The use of literary theory and feminist criticism in this thesis will be restricted to Chapter Five and the Conclusion, where it will be used to illuminate aspects of the texts under examination, and to show that twentieth-century theory was not created out of a vacuum, but that most commonly used literary theories find their roots in earlier literature and philosophy. It

⁵ Lerner, 'Placing Women in History', p. 358.

will be shown in Chapter Five and in the Conclusion how aspects of the texts under scrutiny might be said to fit into theoretical models, but we will avoid the anachronistic imposition of values alien to the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Chapter One will therefore examine the established notion of Woman, its origins and development over the centuries, to show that the reiteration of erroneous 'scientific evidence', coupled with the rigid prescription of the Church Fathers had, by the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, created an almost unassailable image of an ungovernable, wanton, Woman whose behaviour had to be both prescribed and proscribed in the interests of male-dominated society. We will examine the codes of conduct laid down for Woman in courtesy literature and in religious documents, and discuss briefly the daily existence of women for whom the notion of the 'ideal' woman had somehow to be reconciled with the demands of 'real' society.

Chapter Two will contain a biography of Christine de Pizan, as will Chapter Three for Marguerite de Navarre. Both chapters will discuss briefly the current state of academic interest in, and scholarly activity on, these women writers. In Chapter Two, we shall examine the existence of the 'ideal' woman in those prose writings of Christine de Pizan which engage most fully with the *querelle des femmes*, i.e. the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Livre des Trois Vertus*. We shall also make brief reference to the *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, the *Lavision-Christine*, and the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, but only as being further illustrative of Christine's notions of sex-complementarity and exemplarity. We will examine the ways in which Christine adopted authority from the canon and adapted the rhetorical tool of example to expose as inaccurate the preconceived notion of Woman. It will be shown that she achieved this by the constant rejection of universalising generalisation and by stressing the potential in women for active participation in society. Thereafter, we will examine the alternative, not oppositional, codes of conduct provided for women of all stations of society by Christine in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*. In Chapter Three, we shall turn to examine the *Heptaméron* of Marguerite de Navarre. Again, it will be shown that the

rhetorical devices of authority and example are adopted and adapted in an attempt to create an alternative view of women. We shall see that Marguerite too rejects universalising generalisation on the nature of Woman and exposes the behavioural prescription of men as unrealistic: by examining her use of example through storytelling, we will show that Marguerite exposes the double standards at work in male-dominated society. Chapter Four will synthesise our investigation of the uses of example and authority in the texts under examination by providing concordances of the terms 'example' and 'authority'. We will discuss the ways in which Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre converge with, and diverge from, one another in their use of these terms within the texts. In Chapter Five we will discuss the potential for a critical interpretation of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron*. In this Chapter, as will be discussed later, we shall restrict our study to these works because they offer concrete examples more accessible to critical interpretation, rather than the abstract admonitions of the *Livre des Trois Vertus*. In this chapter, we will contend that, whilst the use of critical theory can be a stimulating tool for analysis, no single school of critical thought can be applied in its entirety onto a far earlier text. We will make selected use of theory on selected elements of the texts, adopting a heuristic approach to the various schools of critical thought. In the Conclusion it will be shown that both Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre adapt or edit examples drawn from earlier sources as part of their attempt to expose the prevailing notion of Woman as inaccurate. We will contend that, although they will be shown to have several sources in common, they differ in their references to Boccaccio, to the Bible and to organised religion in general. It will be seen that they both make mention of issues central to the female experience, such as rape, but that their narrative depiction of these issues differs from one another. We will discuss whether, as participants in the *querelle des femmes*, they can be described as feminists, or whether they are more accurately seen as 'feminists' in terms of the established literary techniques that they use. The Bibliography contains a complete list of all works that have been consulted in the preparation of this thesis. An *oeuvres citées* approach to

this material has been avoided because much of the background information in this thesis has been amassed over time from works in the 'General Sources' sections: to include only those texts from which quotations have been taken would be unrepresentative of the volume of reading material consulted for this work.

CHAPTER ONE

The Hagiography of the Helpmeet

Irrationally held truths may be more harmful than reasoned errors
(T.H. Huxley)

If the purpose of this thesis is to examine the ways in which the women writers of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries used established rhetorical devices in order to expose the prevailing notion of Woman as unrealistic, we must first examine what was understood by the term Woman during this period. This chapter will discuss the transmission of opinion about Woman from Antiquity to the Renaissance and will examine upon what basis assertions as to the nature of Woman were founded. It will also be established that the notion of Woman, as defined by successive generations of male philosophers and clerics, was irreconcilable with the demands society made upon women. This chapter will also illuminate and examine the fundamental dichotomy existing between the 'ideal' woman as represented in literature and real women living in late-Medieval and Renaissance France. Such a discussion necessitates an examination of the works of literature written specifically for the edification and instruction of women, as it is in these works that the reader will find the 'ideal' woman. Thereafter will follow an examination of the reality of women's lives in late-Medieval and Renaissance French society.

This cannot be undertaken without first defining the parameters of this study and the method to be adopted. Duby wrote, 'I am neither a canonist, a liturgist, nor a theologian', and defined his approach as being 'from the perspective of social history'.¹ We shall follow his example and consider this subject from the perspective of one attempting an *histoire des mentalités* as a woman('s) historian and literary analyst. As this thesis as a whole attempts to illuminate the subtle manipulation by the female author of the codes of conduct propounded for the Woman, this chapter will show that the inherent inferiority of Woman was generally accepted, and that the debate between the 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' schools was an academic one which

¹ Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage - Two models from Twelfth-Century France* (The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1978), p. 1.

held no import for the average woman who, whether or not she resented her position, was ill-equipped to contest it. The terms 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' are used advisedly: for the twentieth-century scholar, these terms are too charged with often negative connotations arising out of the backlash to the women's movements of the 1960's and 1970's to be satisfactorily descriptive of Medieval and Renaissance schools of thought. It is, however, accepted practice in this field of study to use these terms, a fact evidenced by the very multiplicity of texts which do so. We will therefore employ these terms within inverted commas in order to mark them out as being applied in a context alien to their accepted contemporary meaning, although MacLean argues that, when applied to Renaissance France, 'feminism' 'may be [...] described as a reassessment in woman's favour of the relative capacities of the sexes'.² In the absence of other, less potentially anachronistic terms, we shall continue the accepted practice with one caveat: that we shall mark these terms with inverted commas when applying them to the late-Medieval and Renaissance *querelle des femmes*. At all other times, where they appear without commas, they may be accepted to be encoded with their late-twentieth-century connotations.

If this thesis is to examine the way in which the Woman author might be seen to undermine the ideal Woman portrayed in courtesy literature by exposing it as fundamentally unattainable, this chapter must examine the courtesy literature of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance in order to furnish the yardstick by which the work of the woman author might be measured. This requires further explanation to elucidate the parameters of study: courtesy literature for the instruction and edification of women is, by its nature, designed to be read by women, therefore this study will restrict itself to an examination of that layer of society where one might reasonably expect to find the literate woman with leisure enough to read such works - the upper classes and aristocracy. We shall not examine the existence of 'mirrors', or educational manuals written for young men: for the most part, these were created specifically to instruct young princes in kingship and warfare and have no place in a study of the

² Ian MacLean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. viii.

daily existence of women. Furthermore, if we accept that courtesy literature was written to provide an ideal to which women should aspire, we must first examine the prevailing notion of the Woman as the foundation upon which to base an examination of the codes of conduct propounded for women in works of courtesy literature. As such, this chapter will begin by investigating the evolution of the notion of Woman; its origins, foundations, justifications, propagators and proponents.

MacLean comments that 'there is less change in the notion of the Woman throughout the Renaissance than intellectual ferment and empirical enquiry of various kinds might lead one to expect'.³ This is a statement which one might reasonably argue could equally be applied to the late-Medieval period. The basic explanation for this is relatively simple: despite the differences in intellectual climate and literary convention between the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the foundations of the prevailing notion of Woman remain the same. Describing the notion of Woman, MacLean remarks elsewhere that it is 'molecular in structure, consisting of an interdependent network of assumptions taken from different intellectual spheres'.⁴ Whilst undeniably true, this statement must be seen in context as the culmination of a long period of evolution and it will be shown that, despite social and political change, the salient points debated in the *querelle des femmes* remained unchanged from Antiquity. Put simply, an assertion reiterated with sufficient regularity and force acquires a *de facto* veneer of truth and, as such, is easily perpetuated. As Elizabeth Castelli comments 'Orthodoxy's power derives from its own dogmatism and its claim to absolute truth; the vacillations of orthodox truth over time have produced the approved bibliography and the filters through which information has passed', adding that 'heterodox texts have survived through historical accident'.⁵ In this thesis throughout, we shall use the terms *canon* or *canonical orthodoxy* to denote the 'truth' to which Castelli refers, that is to say all domains of philosophical and religious

³ Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.1.

⁴ MacLean, *Woman Triumphant*, p.1.

⁵ Elizabeth Castelli, 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 2 (1986), 61-88 (p. 62).

thought on women. Where we mean only to denote ecclesiastical writings, we shall use *Canonical*, or refer to the *Canon*.

A vast amount of research has been undertaken in this area, and from many different perspectives: Old and New Testament scholars, classicists, philosophers, historians, new historians and feminists have all contributed to the burgeoning field of women's history in numbers which preclude our mentioning all but a very few.⁶ Work in the field of women's history has focused predominantly upon examinations of women's lives in earlier societies, often taking the form of source books, where womens' writings are translated and collated to give an overview of the reality of women's existences. Emilie Amt, Katharina Wilson and Alcuin Blamires are but three editors who have contributed to this field for the Early Modern period.⁷ Broader studies incorporating the early philosophers and patristic writers have been produced by such scholars as Prudence Allen, Ian MacLean, R. Howard Bloch and, more recently, by Nancy Tuana.⁸ Increasingly, such examinations have come to incorporate the use of critical theory; amongst these, Gerda Lerner has produced two influential volumes, and edited collections of critical essays appear regularly.⁹ Given the volume of excellent work already undertaken in this field, it would be redundant for us to examine in such detail the evolution of the notion of Woman over time. It is, however, essential that we should survey this evolutionary process, albeit briefly: our purpose in this thesis is to examine the ways in which two women writers can be seen to

⁶ For reference, see our Bibliography. This is by no means comprehensive, given the sheer volume of work produced world-wide in this field, but it will serve to illustrate the various approaches taken to the development of women's history in all academic domains.

⁷ *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Emilie Amt (London: Routledge, 1993); *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. by Katharina M. Wilson (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984) and *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁸ Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC - AD 1250* (Quebec: Eden Press, 1985); Ian MacLean, *Woman Triumphant* and *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (see above); R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).

⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

subvert the prevailing image of Woman, and, if we are to fully comprehend the nature of their achievement, we must first in this chapter achieve an understanding of the weight of the canon.

Chronology demands that we begin by consulting the early thinkers and doctors, amongst them Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle and Plato. Antecedent to the Church Fathers,¹⁰ it is in their works that the reasoned conjecture forming the basis for the subordination of women is found. Prudence Allen states that 'nearly every single philosopher over the first two thousand years of western philosophy thought about the identity of woman in relation to man [...] the concept of woman has been a fundamental area of philosophical research since the sixth century BC'.¹¹ We shall not attempt to engage here in an examination of every early pronouncement upon the nature of Woman, but we shall give an overview of the more salient points of debate.

Jacquart and Thomasset remark that 'The medieval anatomist is most often presented [...] as a theoretician, blinded by the confidence he placed in the authority of Galen, whose authenticity he merely sought to verify'.¹² This must be seen as a simplistic retrospective for, as they go on to point out, the transmission of medical knowledge from Antiquity into the Middle Ages was by no means without impediment. Not only was Galen only one of several sources of authority, as we shall see, but the successive translation of the philosophers' and doctors' works from one language into another without diagrammatic accompaniment provided ample opportunity for error and inaccurate or fragmented translation. The resultant diversity of 'authority' and opinion, paradoxically, proved invaluable to the perpetuation of certain ideas fundamental to the early notion of Woman. As in Nature, diversity can be concomitant with longevity: one opinion might, with relative ease, be disproved or

¹⁰ 'Originally, this term was applied to bishops and witnesses of the Christian tradition, but from the end of the fourth century its use became more restricted - namely, to those whose authority on doctrinal matters carried special weight [...] Generally, the patristic period is considered closed with Saint Isidore of Seville in the West and Saint John of Damascus in the East': Vern L. Bullough, 'The Christian Inheritance' in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage, (Buffalo, NY.: Prometheus Books, 1982), p. 2 n.

¹¹ Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, p. 1.

¹² Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), p.7.

discredited by one single opposing argument. However, if there exists a multiplicity of opinions which, although heterogeneous in many ways, have in common a central core of fundamental assertions, these assertions survive. Reiteration creates a *de facto* authority and the recurrence of certain opinions in the works of Hippocrates, Galen, Plato and Aristotle creates a consensus to be later adopted and adapted by the Church Fathers.

Crucial to the notion of Woman founded in Antiquity was the fundamental assertion of her physical imperfection and, more specifically, the notion of Woman as an imperfect male. As Jacquart and Thomasset remark:

Although a close relation was established between man and woman, the fact remains that woman was described with reference to man. The model, the positive pole of the comparison, was taken as the norm, and the other pole, which was given a negative value, was considered imperfect. (p.36)

The Pythagorean table of opposites (c.530 BC) is one of the earliest expressions of sexual polarity in the field of metaphysics, where Man is given a superior value over Woman. Allen notes that Pythagorean theory emphasised the need for virtue in human existence and that 'Pythagoras argued that both women and men ought to be chaste and monogamous'.¹³ This oppositional theory of sex identity continued to be discussed and developed until it found a fuller expression in the writings of Hippocrates (c.460-377 BC), 'universally considered to be the Father of Medicine'.¹⁴ In the Hippocratic writings, we find the Male (hot and dry) related to the right and associated with good; the Female (cold and moist) related to the left and associated with bad. Hippocrates also introduced the notion of the four humours: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm, believing that these humours created the female 'seed' excreted by women during sexual intercourse. The philosophy of Plato (c.428-355 BC), pupil of Socrates, is more problematic and, at times, seemingly contradictory. It would appear that on a cosmic level, as delineated in the *Timaeus*, Plato supports a

¹³ Allen, *op cit*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 46.

theory of opposition, arguing that Woman is weaker matter, where Man represents form and strength. However, in the *Republic*, written at the same time, he appears to argue that 'The identity of a woman or man comes from their mind (or soul) and not from their body. The material aspects of generation [...] have no role at all on the level of actual human existence'.¹⁵ Woman as concept is inherently weaker, due to her inferior body, but a woman may gain in wisdom, although this process will take her longer than it would a man. Aristotle (384-322 BC) took as the metaphysical bases for his theory of generation the opposites of cold and hot. In this, he developed Hippocrates' theory by attributing a superior value to heat as a male property over cold as a female quality, and by asserting that lack of heat made Woman inferior, an imperfect man. Declaring the labia formed mainly for decorative purposes to keep the uterus from catching cold and stressing the notion of an inverted similarity between the male and female sexual organs, Woman's interior imperfection could be found in her 'testicles'; smaller than Man's and therefore proof of the non-existence of female 'sperm'.

Moving from basic assertions on Woman's make-up to the issue of her role in procreation, we again find a certain diversity of opinion amongst the early thinkers. Hippocrates believed in the existence of female ejaculate and that the human embryo was the union of two seeds. Aristotle, however, precluded the existence of a female seed by attesting that menstrual blood was the equivalent of male sperm. Later, Galen asserted that, whilst a female seed existed, it was useful only in as far as it incited the Woman to sexual intercourse and opened the neck of the uterus. Other divergences arise as to the location of spermatogenesis in men: whilst Galen would later discover this to take place in the testicles, Aristotle believed the brain to be the site of sperm production, which was then stored in the testicles. This theory lent credence to an argument particularly successful in repressing human sexual activity, viz. that too many emissions would drain the brain and shrivel the eyes. It is interesting, if only as an aside, to note that this is a belief which has existed in apocryphal form well into the

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 61.

twentieth century, to the chagrin of many a hormonal schoolboy. On the issue of sexual pleasure, however, by following Aristotle and Plato, Galen established an authority by finalising a consensus of opinion which, like the notion of female imperfection, would be found regularly in the works of the Church Fathers. The early thinkers attributed the pleasure experienced by men in the sexual act as the contribution of Nature who, in her infinite wisdom, endowed her male creatures with this capacity for gratification as an incentive in order to ensure species continuation.

Thus, Hippocrates and Galen as doctors concerned themselves primarily with Woman's physicality. It must be noted, however, that very few medical experiments were carried out on the human form; sheep and goats were popular subjects, and the animals which could have afforded the closest comparison with the human anatomy, monkeys, Galen preferred not to work with, as their faces expressed pain too obviously. Plato, whilst seeming to suggest the capacity in women for wisdom, at the same time reinforced the idea of Woman's physical imperfection by first raising the question of the womb as an independent animal which, when unsatisfied, 'gets discontented and angry'.¹⁶ That this notion was well-known amongst the earlier thinkers can be seen in Aretaeus:

In the middle of the flanks of women lies the womb [...] closely resembling an animal; for it is moved of itself hither and thither in the flanks, also upwards to [...] the thorax, also obliquely to the right and left, either to the liver or the spleen [...] and, in a word, it is altogether erratic. It delights, also, in fragrant smells, and advances towards them: and it has an aversion to fetid smells, and flees from them; and, on the whole, the womb is like an animal within an animal.¹⁷

Jacquart and Thomasset contend that the notion of a wandering womb had 'little influence on medieval medical ideas' (p.173), but was certainly the subject of some debate during the Renaissance and was a not uncommon argument from the 'antifeminist' school of thought. Aristotle, although willing to accord Woman a mental

¹⁶ Plato, 'Origins of the Desire for Procreation', trans. by B. Jowett in, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, ed. by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant (London: Duckworth, 1982), p. 81.

¹⁷ Aretaeus, 'On the Causes and Symptoms of Acute Diseases 2', trans. by F. Adams in *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, p. 225.

capacity complementary, not identical to man's, condemned women to a subjugation made inevitable by their inferior physicality. He declared that 'The female [...] is female on account of an inability of a sort, viz. it lacks the power to concoct semen [...] because of the coldness of its nature'.¹⁸

Overall, and notwithstanding Plato's emphasis upon the superiority of the soul over the body, Allen contends that women were 'in general, considered to be significantly different from and inferior to men' (p. 77) in early Greek philosophy. Woman is cold and moist, man hot and dry where heat equals perfection. Wanton and ungovernable, Woman's humidity causes her to feel physical desire, her coldness preventing the effective digestion of blood which must therefore be purged from the body through sexual intercourse. Her primary physical function being the ability to bear children, Woman's imperfection compared to man was seen in the composition of her genitalia and internal sexual organs.

It is therefore possible to establish the existence of a consensus of opinion about women amongst the thinkers of Antiquity in several areas. Firstly, at the mercy of her humours, Woman is an unrestrainable creature, prey to her sexual desire. Secondly, in her sexual make-up, she is an imperfect male whose role in procreation was deemed to be more seed-bed than active partner. Thirdly, the fact that the active partner (Man) experiences pleasure in the sexual act is part of a master plan to avoid extinction.

It is hardly surprising, then, that such a corpus of information should be the foundation for the Church Fathers' treatment of women. As R. Howard Bloch notes, 'The attitudes towards gender that Christianity combines and crystallizes are to be found just about everywhere in the ancient world' (p. 75). It is during this period of development in the notion of the Woman that we first find didactic literature written for the Woman, literature which takes as its basis the imperfections of the female sex as a means of instructing her how she might aspire, by her conduct, to rise above her weakness.

¹⁸ Aristotle, 'On the Generation of Animals', trans. by A.L. Peck in, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, pp. 83-4.

Bernard Prusak notes that two features are common to Greek mythology and the story of the Fall— 'the agency of woman in the cause of evil and the acquisition of knowledge as the means of temptation to it', noting, as does Bloch, the example of the Sirens' temptation of Odysseus as a classical example.¹⁹ As we turn now to examine the nature of Woman depicted by the early Christian writers, it is in the book of Genesis, the Creation myth and the Fall, that we find the first explicit expression of Woman's subordination and the denunciation of Woman's sin.

Bloch states that 'One of the great facts of cultural amnesia, which has only recently begun to creep back into memory, is that the Bible contains not one but two stories of Creation.' (p. 22); the 'priestly' version of simultaneous creation, and the Yahwist account of Adam and Eve. He goes on to say that 'the priestly Genesis has been all but forgotten' and 'That it has not endured is itself the story as well as the effect of a textual repression indissociable from the story of sexual repression contained in the version that dominates' (p. 23). Certainly it is the Yahwist version of Creation (Genesis 2:7) that is appropriated by the patristic writers and which we shall discuss below.

We shall now provide a brief sketch of each of the early patristic writers, noting the salient or characteristic features of their individual attitudes towards Woman. Thereafter, we shall synthesise the areas of opinion which, held in common like the Creation myth, form the basic notion of Woman and delineate those areas of prescriptive consensus in their didactic works for women. It should be noted at this point that, although we have elected to mention each of these fathers of the early Church in chronological order, they must all be seen as successors of Paul, himself the product of the intellectual inheritance of the earlier thinkers. As he says in Romans 1: 14, 'I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians'.

Certain assertions from the epistles of Paul are fundamental to the patristic notion of Woman, and most are found in the epistles to the Corinthians. We will note

¹⁹ Bernard P. Prusak, 'Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin?' in, *Religion and Sexism*, ed. by Rosemary Ruether Radford (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 89-116, (p. 89). See also Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 14.

these assertions here, but we shall incorporate our discussion of them into our examination of the later writers as inheritors of Pauline opinion. All quotations are taken from the authorised King James Bible. In I Timothy, 2: 9-15, Paul not only upholds the Yahwist version of the Creation, 'For Adam was first formed, then Eve', but also projects the greater culpability for the Fall onto Eve; 'And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression' and in I Corinthians, 11: 7-9, 'For the man is not of the woman; but the woman is of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man'. As for the various stages in women's life, Paul has comments to make on each. Castelli suggests that 'Treatises and homilies on virginity and renunciation had their origins in the third century in Africa and seem to have become a favorite of writers in the fourth century and afterwards' (pp. 63-4). In I Corinthians, 7: 25, however, Paul writes 'concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgement', going on to say 'The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body, and in spirit'. Evidently virginity is superior to the married state. However, 'it is better to marry than to burn' (I Corinthians, 7: 9) and marriage is tolerated by Paul, as it would be by the later Church Fathers, only as a remedy against fornication, for 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman' (I Corinthians, 7: 1). For the married woman, Paul has many prescriptions. Women 'are commanded to be under obedience [...] And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home' (I Corinthians, 14: 34-5).²⁰ As for the conjugal debt, 'The wife hath not the power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not the power of his own body, but the wife' (I Corinthians, 7: 4). Women should 'adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold', should keep her head covered (I Corinthians 11: 4-15) and 'should learn in silence, with all subjection' (I Timothy, 2: 9-11). For the widow, in Romans 7: 2-3 and I Corinthians, 7: 39, Paul seems to suggest that it is acceptable under law to remarry, but of the celibate state he says 'I say therefore to [...] widows, It is good for

²⁰ The influence of Pauline opinion can be seen in I Peter, 3: 1 'Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands'.

them if they abide even as I' (I Corinthians, 7: 8), therefore exhibiting a degree of personal disapproval towards remarriage without explicit condemnation. This disapproval of marriage and remarriage is found to varying degrees in the works of all the patristic writers, finding its most powerfully condemnatory expression in Tertullian.

Tertullian (155-222 AD) was born in Carthage, the son of a centurion. A trained lawyer, he converted to Christianity mid-life and his Christian writings cover the period 197 AD to his death. Often described as the Father of Latin Theology, it is generally accepted that Tertullian was extremely well-educated and was therefore highly skilled in the use of logic and rhetoric, as well as being familiar with early Philosophy. Although a married man, Tertullian was the first great ascetic, extolling the ideal of virginity as the one true path to spiritual union with God. Bornstein states that 'Tertullian had some words of praise for marriage'²¹ but adds that these few words of praise went largely neglected by the later Church Fathers, for whom Tertullian had set an extremely widely-read and profoundly influential precedent in his treatises criticising women. Drawing upon the Watcher legend,²² Tertullian was fiercely hostile towards personal decoration or adornment in women, describing it as the work of the devil. In *On Female Dress*, he wrote;

Female habit carries with it a two-fold idea— dress and ornament. By "dress" we mean what they call "womanly gracing"; by "ornament" what is suitable should be called "womanly *disgracing*" [...] Against the one way lay the charge of ambition, against the other of prostitution.²³

Tertullian was also the first of the Church Fathers to describe women as 'The Devil's Gateway', a description which would persist in 'antifeminist' writings. Again in *On Female Dress*, he accused women thus:

²¹ Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower - Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1983), p.16.

²² See Prusak, *passim*.

²³ Tertullian, 'On Female Dress' (I;4) in, *Writings*, 4 vols., ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. by S. Thelwall, Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD. 325, vol. 11 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), 304-32.

And do you not know that you are [each] an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live there too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that [forbidden] tree. (I; 1)

The Christian woman, if she must be married, does not cultivate her beauty but devotes herself to her husband and her home; 'Submit your head to your husbands, and you will be enough adorned' (II; 13). As Bullough comments:

Most of the Church Fathers were bachelors and so, perhaps, are somewhat biased in their attitudes towards marital [...] relations, but even those, such as Tertullian, who was married, tended to denigrate marriage [...] In his *Letters to His Wife* he writes as if there were no sexual element in marriage at all and, in fact, argues that celibacy was much to be preferred.²⁴

It must be remembered at this point, however, that Christianity was not adopted as the religion of the Roman state until 324 AD. It is not unreasonable to suppose, therefore, that an early Christian attempting to proselytise would not only be fervent in his beliefs, but also extremely forceful in his judgements, part of the process that Bloch describes as 'the effort to instil decorum into Christian worship as opposed to what was perceived as the orgiastic, pneumatic frenzies of the pagan cults' (p. 40). Whilst Tertullian is undeniably the early fundamentalist of the Church Fathers and had a profound effect on the thinking of his successors, his writings were probably less influential in later centuries than those of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine.

Ambrose (339-397 AD) is often portrayed as having a more lenient attitude towards women than the other Church Fathers. Dudden claims that Ambrose does not specifically assign an inferior, imperfect status to Woman, but that he generally ascribes a greater strength to men and describes them as the 'principal' sex.²⁵ Thus, it becomes fitting that men should govern women, although husbands should endeavour

²⁴ Vern L. Bullough, 'The Christian Inheritance' in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, p. 7.

²⁵ F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St Ambrose*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), vol. 1, pp. 133-34 n.

to guard against tyranny, because Woman is a necessary being. Man is better equipped for public service, Woman for domestic, but the two sexes should complement one another. Bornstein notes the generosity of the bishop of Milan towards Woman, remarking that Ambrose saw 'the feminine as a principle in mankind that extended beyond the social or physical boundaries of the female sex' and that, for the saint, 'Within mankind, woman represent[ed] the principle of universality and life'.²⁶ Whilst tolerant of marriage as a useful, if burdensome, means of species continuation, it must be noted that Ambrose subscribed to the patristic asceticism and lauded the ideal state of virginity for Woman. In *Concerning Virgins* he wrote that 'the name of virgin is a title of modesty' (I: II) and 'virginity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs, but because itself makes martyrs' (I: III).²⁷ Discussing marriage in relation to virginity, he stated 'I am not indeed discouraging marriage, but am enlarging upon the benefits of virginity' (I: VI) and that 'In the former is the remedy for weakness, in the latter the glory of chastity. The former is not reprov'd, the latter is praised' (I: VI), going further to say that parents should encourage their daughters to embrace the celibate state, but that it is even better if a young woman should choose to remain a virgin against her parents' wishes (I: XII). On the issue of remarriage, in *Concerning Widows*, Ambrose cites Paul in his advice against second marriages. Like Paul, without explicitly condemning remarriage, he follows the apostle's assertion in I Corinthians, 7: 8 and 39-40, noted above, by saying that 'the inculcation of virginity is strengthened by the example of the widow' (Chapter I) and that 'a widow is not only marked off by bodily abstinence but is distinguished by virtue' (Chapter II).²⁸ In this, he attempts to make chaste widowhood a more attractive

²⁶ Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower*, p. 16.

²⁷ Ambrose, 'Concerning Virgins' in, *Selected Works and Letters*, ed. by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, trans. by H. De Romestin, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series vol. 10 (New York & Oxford: Christian Literature Publishing & Parker, 1896), 363-87.

²⁸ Ambrose, 'Concerning Widows' in, *Selected Works and Letters*, ed. by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, trans. by H. De Romestin, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series vol. 10 (New York & Oxford: Christian Literature Publishing & Parker, 1896), 391-407.

prospect, acceptable to God, and opens up the possibility for positive action in the widow by citing the examples of Judith's and Deborah's bravery (Chapter II).

Another enthusiastic proponent of the celibate state was Jerome (331-420 AD),²⁹ contemporary of Ambrose. A certain amount of disagreement can be detected between the various accounts of Jerome, his life, ministry and his attitude towards women. Bornstein claims that Jerome considered woman inferior 'but believed a woman could rise above her nature through virginity and study of scripture'.³⁰ She goes on to say that 'He treated women who chose such a life as equals, giving them advice, instruction, and encouragement'.³¹ This is a somewhat romanticised, even naïve, view of the Saint, of whom it is remarked by Greenslade that:

He lacked breadth of mind, and would rarely try to understand the other point of view. He nursed animosities and grievances, and only too often let his clever and satirical pen run away with him [...] he was no philosopher and not really a constructive, certainly not an original, theologian, [but] he was the outstanding scholar of his time.³²

Rosemary Radford Ruether comments on Jerome's 'strict logic' that he can be seen to extend the Pauline assertion that 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman, (I Corinthians 7: 1) into 'If it is good not to touch a woman, then it is bad to touch a woman'.³³ Ruether also notes that 'Jerome is generous to the point of extravagance in his praise of [...] ascetic women', but that 'Marriage he regards as inherently polluting, and childbearing disgusting' (p. 173).

The apparent disparity of opinion notwithstanding, it would be fair to say that Jerome was one of the most influential theologians of the early Church. Unafraid to

²⁹ There is some debate as to the exact date of Jerome's birth, which J.N.D. Kelly places in 331 AD. Other biographers have placed it in the mid-340's, but Kelly notes that most of the "difficulties" raised by placing Jerome's birth in 331 are undermined by close examination of source material. For a more detailed explanation, see: J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome - His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), appendix.

³⁰ Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower*, p. 17.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 17.

³² S.L. Greenslade (ed. and trans.), *Early Latin Theology - selections from Tertullian, Cyrian, Ambrose and Jerome* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1956), pp. 287-88.

³³ Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church' in, *Religion and Sexism*, 150-83, (p. 166).

criticise the earlier Fathers, Jerome dismissed the notion that, by giving birth, Mary had lost her virginity and that thereafter she and Joseph enjoyed a normal conjugal relationship. Tertullian had been one of the greatest exponents of this notion, but was denigrated by Jerome, whom he described in his *Against Helvidius* as not being a man of the church. Jerome's influence can be seen in the fact that Augustine would follow his example and cite Mary as the first consecrated virgin. Jerome praised marriage only for its ability to produce virgins to be consecrated to God, as Ambrose's sister Marcellina had been, and he encouraged the women for whom he acted as spiritual adviser to consecrate their virgin daughters whilst still children. His belief in the primacy of virginity can be seen in his *Against Jovinianus* when he said that 'virginity ever took the lead of chastity'.³⁴

In the generation after Jerome, St Augustine of Hippo has been described as the 'single most influential writer on Christian theology during the "patristic" period', whose views became the accepted position of the medieval church.³⁵ Born in 354 AD, he was not baptised until adulthood, by which time he had already fathered a son at the age of 18 by his concubine. His concubine having been dismissed by his mother, Monica, and his fiancée still under-age, the young Augustine took another mistress. Attached to the Manichaeans for more than ten years, Augustine appears to have been impressed by the preaching of Ambrose and finally embraced the religion of his mother towards 390 AD, at the same time accepting a life of asceticism and continence. Thereafter, it would appear that Augustine became extremely reserved towards women, never conversing with one alone.³⁶ The sceptic might be forgiven for concluding from this that Augustine found women a continuing temptation and that therefore he felt less revulsion towards women than some of the other patristic writers, but this is unsubstantiated. Ruether suggests that, for Augustine, Woman as

³⁴ Jérôme, 'Against Jovinianus' (I:41) in, *Letters and Selected Works*, ed. by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, trans. by W.H. Freemantle, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series, vol. 6 (New York & Oxford: Christian Literature Publishing & Parker, 1893), 346-416.

³⁵ Emilie Amt (ed.), *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe - A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

³⁶ Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence - The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustin and Thomas Aquinas*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), pp. 2-14.

represented by Eve in the Creation 'is a helpmeet solely for the corporeal task of procreation', but that 'For any spiritual task another male would be more suitable [...] as a helpmeet' (p. 156). She goes on to say that, whereas the other Fathers attribute woman's inferiority 'first to sin and then to nature, [in] Augustine the stress falls decidedly on the side of woman's natural inferiority [...] in the right ordering of nature, and thus he is somewhat temperate in his polemics against Eve' (p. 157). Whilst he admitted in his *Soliloquia* that the married state could be useful to a man, particularly if his bride were affluent or influential, Augustine did not believe procreation a valid enough reason for entering into marriage. Continence was the means by which one obliterated oneself to God.

Gregory of Nyssa (331-395 AD), according to Ruether 'had a much more positive outlook on married life than [...] Augustine and Jerome' and that for Gregory 'virginity comes close to being a metaphor for an inner attitude of detachment and spiritual uplifting [...] rather than being fixed upon the question of lack of sexual union' (p. 177). As he wrote in *On Virginity* 'virginity is the practical method in the science of the divine life [...] virginity of the body is devised to further [...] the soul; it aims at creating in it a complete forgetfulness of natural emotions'.³⁷ Of marriage, he commented in Chapter 8 'Let no one think however that herein we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing'.

It would appear, then, that a certain diversity may be discerned between the personal attitudes of the earlier Church Fathers towards Woman. The stern Tertullian, first to condemn woman as the 'Devil's Gateway', who abhors the adorned woman and the sexual act, is succeeded by Ambrose who, whilst describing marriage as a 'galling burden' for both parties, was willing to accord it a certain merit as a vehicle for the productions of Christians. Jerome, the pointed satirist of the female sex, tolerant only of marriage as a means of producing virgins, is followed by Augustine, more

³⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, 'On Virginity' (Chapter 5) in, *Dogmatic Treatises*, ed. by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, trans. by William Moore and Henry Austin, A Select library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series, vol. 5 (New York & Oxford: Christian Literature publishing & Parker, 1893), 343-71.

accepting of the institution of marriage whilst still believing in the superiority of virginity, tempered by Gregory of Nyssa's determination to find the means for good within marriage. This is, however, at best an over-simplification of the early patristic writers and, needless to say, despite the occasional divergences in their personal emotions, there exists an overall consensus of opinion on Woman and a corpus of prescriptive literature for her instruction. It must also be understood here that, in many instances, the treatises of the Church Fathers, wherein we find the reasoned argument for Woman's inferiority and subjugation, double as documents of instruction for women.

Overall, therefore, the superiority of virginity is lauded by the patristic writers as the supreme state for spiritual salvation. Only by devoting her whole being to God could Woman hope to attain what Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg termed the 'celestial gynaeceum'.³⁸ Schulenberg notes that

There is a great deal of continuity in the didactic works on virginity. Beginning with St Paul's injunction on the superiority of virginity, the writings of the Church Fathers firmly implant this concept in the mentality of the Latin West (p. 31)

However, the attainment of the virgin state was not without difficulty and it was not enough for a woman simply to be pure in body to be termed a 'virgin'. As Bloch comments 'as the fathers make abundantly clear, it is not merely enough to be chaste' (p. 98). A distinction is drawn between bodily chastity and spiritual virginity, and a virgin is not simply a woman who has never had sexual intercourse, but one who has never wanted to, and one who has never been physically desired by a man. Bloch notes that, according to Tertullian 'a *virgin* ceases to be a virgin from the time it becomes possible for her *not* to be one'.³⁹ The virgin, freed from her reproductive function, transcends her nature and can become 'manly'.⁴⁰

³⁸ Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg, 'The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation' in, *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 29-72, (p. 31).

³⁹ Tertullian, 'On the Veiling of Virgins', cited in Bloch, p. 101.

⁴⁰ Leander of Seville, cited in Ruether, p. 159.

What then, according to the Church Fathers, is Woman? She is an inferior animal to man; created second, she is an auxiliary being. She is imperfect because, created whilst Adam was not fully conscious, she could not have equal mental capacities. If Man is explicitly described as superior, then Woman must implicitly be found inferior. Her subordination to Man therefore is part of the natural order, supported by the assertion in Ephesians 5: 23, that Christ is the Head of Man just as Man is the head of Woman. The subjugation of Eve, created for and of Adam, is taken as the model for all married couples: subordination is part of the order of creation. The sin of Eve is at the root of original sin. As Ruether notes:

This depersonalized view of sexual relations gives three basic images of woman in the Church Fathers: woman as whore, woman as wife, as woman as virgin. As whore, woman is wholly the image of that 'revolting carnality' that entices the rational mind down from its heavenly seat to 'wallow' in the flesh [...] As wife [...] a woman has no personal rights over her own body, but must surrender her body to her husband on command, receiving from such use no personal pleasure, but allowing herself to be used solely as an instrument of procreation [...] as virgin [h]ere alone woman rises to spirituality, personhood and equality with the male, but only at the expense of crushing out of her being all vestiges of her bodily and her female 'nature'. (p. 163-4)

Classical tradition was therefore reinforced by successive centuries of biblical exegesis. To quote Bloch:

If much of the material we have encountered so far seems to be all of a piece, if it seems repetitious to the point of monotony, this is [...] because the teachings of the church fathers on the subject of women were passed to the Middle Ages in collections or florilegia, where they were read, cited, and repeated in other works. (p. 47)

This had, by the Middle Ages, created an all-encompassing notion of Woman that would constitute the foundation for the *querelle des femmes*. It can be reasonably argued that this debate began in earnest with the *querelle du 'Roman de la Rose'* engendering fierce arguments for and against Woman's subjection. However, two other significant factors played an important role in reopening the discussion of Woman's lot. The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, written during the thirteenth century and widely debated thereafter, reiterated some of the notions of the earlier

patristic writers and was profoundly influenced by Aristotle. Aquinas acknowledges the necessity of woman's existence for the reproduction of the human race, but asserts her naturally inferior position as arising out of the book of Genesis, which 'virtually everyone thought [...] was a literally true record of the world's history'.⁴¹ Børresen notes that:

The passages in Thomas where the imperfection of woman is given as the basis for her subordination are scattered throughout his writings. The reason is that he never actually posed woman's subjection to man as a problem. The state of things was for him an established fact, which had neither to be proved nor justified, because it was rooted in the structure of society and in the customs of his time. It is difficult to know how he defined this imperfection of woman which, he says, affected both her soul and body, but about which he never gave precise details.⁴²

Additionally, the appearance in translation during the thirteenth century of previously unknown works of Aristotle, emphasising the physiological deformity of woman at a time when Aristotle's 'position as the Philosopher was undisputed except to those theologians whose point of view had been shaped by their loyalty to Augustine'.⁴³ The influence of Aquinas and Aristotle should not be considered in isolation; the main source of logic for scholars was Aristotle, as commented upon by Boethius. Aquinas follows the Aristotelian theory of biology 'which gave a "scientific" basis to the antifemale tradition inherited from the Fathers', thus giving new strength to the erroneous notion of Woman from Antiquity by reinforcing this image with Canonical authority.⁴⁴

It would be fair to say that Jean de Meung's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* was also a catalyst in the growing debate over the relationship between the sexes. Often perceived as deeply misogynist, de Meung furnished the 'antifeminist' school with much ammunition and was roundly abused as such by Christine de Pizan

⁴¹ Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection - attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society*, (London: Arnold, 1995), pp. 23-4.

⁴² Børresen, *op cit.*, p. 174.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴⁴ Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, 'Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology' in, *Religion and Sexism*, 213-66, (p. 216).

and Jean Gerson, amongst others. It is now questionable whether de Meung's intentions were quite so defamatory towards Woman. Indeed, one might well ask if he were not more concerned with poking fun at the literary conventions of the day, but we should not ignore his influence in the quarrel which would continue for some time. The *querelle des femmes* was not simply a literary debate, but comprised contributions from all areas of theology, medicine and philosophy as well as literary satires and panegyrics. Nor was it confined to the Middle Ages, but continued well into the Renaissance and even into the seventeenth century, neglected occasionally for periods of time before being rekindled by the publication of a particularly controversial work. As with the evolution of the notion of Woman itself, built up over successive centuries from the earliest thinkers of Greece and Rome, divergence of opinion provides ample material for debate. We have noted that, despite certain areas of heterodox opinion, the basic image of Woman remained from Antiquity. Likewise, during the *querelle des femmes*, differing images of Woman were expressed, but the basic notion of her imperfection remained.

Almost every aspect of the notion of Woman was discussed during the *querelle des femmes* and the Renaissance, beginning with the theological debate renewed by Aquinas. Was Woman even a human being? Was she made in the image of God and, as such, was she the perfect creation of God or was she an imperfect man, as Aristotle had said? Would Woman stand equally with Man before God at the Resurrection and would she thereafter be recreated in female form? Did Woman have a soul?

Medically, opinion was divided between the authorities of Aristotle and Galen. As far as Plato's question on the animality of the womb is concerned, this debate came to be appropriated during the Renaissance by satirists and 'antifeminists'. As MacLean notes:

Besides satirical or virulently anti-feminist works – the *Disputio nova contra mulieres*, Giuseppe Passi's *I donneschi difetti*, and Troussel's *Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice des femmes* – there are no defences of the proposition that women are monstrous [...] of all

commonplaces, the ones associated with woman as an imperfect male persist longest.⁴⁵

In the domain of philosophy, there was less debate concerning the position of women; the Aristotelian distinction between form and matter characterised form (Man) as active and matter (Woman) as passive. Therefore, as MacLean comments 'since most discussions of virtue presuppose active virtue [...] women [...] are tacitly excluded from a wide section of such writings'.⁴⁶ One significant philosopher of the Renaissance was Erasmus, whose writings, according to Erika Rummel 'offer a kaleidoscope of views current in the Renaissance' and whose texts 'offer a mixture of traditional and progressive thought'.⁴⁷ Rummel goes on to note, however, that these 'progressive views' lie mainly in his works on the education of women, not on their natural female state and that, because of the rhetorical nature of his writing and his use of dialogue or debate, it is difficult to discern his personal opinions (p. 3). Rummel notes that 'In Erasmus' treatises on marriage and widowhood, the conception of women's role can be traced to biblical, classical, and patristic sources' (p. 4). This can be seen in his *The Institution of Marriage*⁴⁸ when he states that 'the wife must defer more to the authority of the head "for the husband is the head of the wife", as Paul said' (p. 95), also following Paul when he says that silence is 'always an ornament in a virtuous wife' (p. 122). Erasmus notes too the influence of parental guidance when he writes of a bride-to-be that 'the girl needs to be told by her parents to be obliging and compliant towards her husband' (p. 93). Overall, Erasmus appears to follow the patristic prescription for simple dress (p. 115) and praises chastity (p.107). In *The Christian Widow*, he continues to follow the patristic writers, by assigning 'the first dignity' to virginity, the second to widowhood and the third to marriage.⁴⁹ Overall, woman is still the 'weaker vessel' (p. 95) and, according to

⁴⁵ MacLean, *Woman Triumphant*. pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ *Erasmus on Women*, ed. by Erika Rummel (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁴⁸ Erasmus, 'The Institution of Marriage', trans. by Michael Heath in, *Erasmus on Women*, pp. 79- 127.

⁴⁹ Erasmus, 'The Christian Widow', trans. by Jennifer Tolbert Roberts in, *Erasmus on Women*, pp. 188-226, (p. 189).

Rummel, Erasmus 'does not recognize women's intrinsic equality or advocate their autonomy from patriarchal control', advocating education only as a means of keeping women 'out of trouble' (p. 9).

The more literary *querelle* during the Renaissance focused upon the division between the 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' writers, the majority of whom sought to prove the pre-eminence of one sex over the other, utilising a combination of authority, example and ratiocination.⁵⁰ Example was by far the most popular method of argument, as it provided an attestable model of behaviour and constituted an elementary method of teaching, accessible to all and unequivocal in message. As such, it was prevalent in both 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' writings. Example can be found first in the writings of Paul and of the Church Fathers, where figures from the Old Testament were cited to illustrate an argument or to attest to the possibility of an acceptable mode of behaviour. By the Renaissance, authority in the form of quotation from the Scriptures and from Holy Writ in general was popular amongst 'antifeminist' writers, whereas a large number of 'feminist' texts were written in dialogue form. Of these, a substantial number presented one interlocutor as a virulent 'antifeminist' who was not uncommonly converted to the female cause by the close of the text.

It would appear, therefore, that by the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, literary production was more concerned with the glorification or the denigration of the female sex than with her instruction. The same cannot exclusively be said of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for it is here, towards the end of the Middle Ages and before the eruption of the *querelle des femmes*, that we find a wealth of courtesy literature, wherein we find described the 'ideal' woman. This genre should not, however, be seen to exist in a vacuum: these works were written mindful of the prevailing notion of woman as the inferior, subjugated sex, accepting of her inherent imperfection and designed to instruct her how she should endeavour to behave in order to rise above her weakness. Nor should we ascribe any generous,

⁵⁰ MacLean, *Woman Triumphant*, pp. 35-40.

philanthropic motive to the authors of these works: these texts should be seen as a by-product of a male-oriented society. As Bornstein states:

Courtesy books were meant to serve as a guide for behaviour in the real world. Consequently, they reveal a great deal about the rôles women were expected to play [...] the restrictions they were supposed to observe, and the responsibilities they had to fulfil.⁵¹

The majority of courtesy books were written from a parent to a daughter before her marriage, as mirrors for a princess, or even like Ovid, as guides containing practicable information on the arts of love. Some were written by well-known historical figures, such as Saint Louis' *Enseignements à sa fille Isabelle* and his *Conseils de Saint Louis à une de ses filles*, and most were written by men. This therefore means that these works represent a male-generated ideal notion of the Woman for a male-dominated society and, as such, throw into very sharp relief the social and sexual *mores* of the period. Most of the authors of such texts had a vested interest in the creation of such an ideal and in its practice and perpetuation. A father attempting to increase the prestige of his household by arranging a good marriage for his daughter would be anxious to instil in her the 'ideal' behaviour expected by her new husband and family if she were not to risk being repudiated and thus bring shame upon her father. Likewise, as was the case of the *Ménagier de Paris*, a husband could benefit greatly from having an 'ideal' wife: if properly instructed, his bride would give him no cause to doubt the paternity of their children, ensuring the preservation of the patrimony, she would manage the household frugally and leave him in peace to indulge himself, and spend her dowry, however he may. The *Ménagier* is said to have been written between 1392-94 by an ageing husband for his child bride at her request. Bornstein claims that the young woman, anxious not to embarrass her husband by her youth and ignorance, asked him to instruct her privately.⁵²

⁵¹ Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower*, p. 31.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

The rules of behaviour prescribed by the patristic writers for Woman are often just as suggestive of the faults they find in her. For example, urging Woman to practice chastity with such vehemence denotes doubt about her capacity for virtue; prescribing a simple dress code implies a belief in the predisposition of woman to decorate herself, and urging Woman to silence might be seen implicitly to criticise her verbosity. Unlike these treatises, however, which laud the virgin state above all others, most works of Medieval courtesy literature centre upon the duties of the married or marriageable woman.

In marriage, therefore, how should the 'ideal' woman conduct herself? First and foremost, she should be a good Christian, praying every morning, attending Church regularly. The good woman gives alms to the poor and performs pious acts of Charity. If she should be married to an unpleasant man, one who beats her or treats her with disdain and contempt, she should practice forbearance and pray to God for patience. The good wife should aspire to lead an errant husband into better ways through prayer and example: if her husband has taken a mistress, the wife must accept this behaviour as part of God's plan for her and should not berate her husband. She should suffer his infidelity in silence, with grace and pray that her equanimity, love and forgiveness would help her husband see the error of his ways and return his attentions to her. On no account, however, should a woman take a lover for herself; the good woman and wife should preserve her chastity at all costs and reserve her sexual favours for her husband alone. Even in her conjugal relations she should be chaste, always submitting to the sexual act at her husband's insistence, never at her own request. Marriage was created as a remedy against incontinence and as such woman, that lustful creature, should endeavour to tame her urges by subjugating herself to her husband's will and participating in sexual intercourse with no other intention than that of producing a son and heir for the household by honouring the conjugal debt. The conjugal debt was a fundamental part of ecclesiastical doctrine which gave a woman equal rights to her husband's body as he had over hers. However, society demanded a chaste and submissive wife and was thus at odds with

the Church's position. Marriage was the vehicle for the creation of legitimate offspring, creating a more practical social reason for feminine fidelity than the moral ethics of the Church. The aristocracy was perennially preoccupied with preserving the patrimony, hence it became vital that a woman should be faithful to her husband in her sexual relations, in order to preserve the man's inheritance for his own descendants. Chastity is as important to the married woman as it is to the consecrated virgin. Interestingly, a woman who had sexual intercourse with any man other than her husband was an adulteress, whilst men only became adulterers if their partner in the sexual act was a married woman. It was also not uncommon for an adulteress to be killed by her husband or father, an act which, whilst legally condoned only if the couple were caught *in flagrante delicto*, was rarely punished.

The 'ideal' wife is not a spendthrift, in fact, she is quite the reverse. She should not dress herself extravagantly, even if her husband wishes to show his wife or his wealth off to society. Pride and vanity are sins to which woman is particularly prone, she should guard against them and encourage her husband to do likewise. The 'ideal' wife is a wise and frugal household manager, able to run her husband's estate efficiently and, if he should be absent, the 'ideal' wife should be able to defend her husband's land against invaders.

In her household conduct, the 'ideal' wife is an efficient member of the community, leading by example and spending her time in appropriate leisure pursuits, such as spinning, embroidery and reading, preferably the Bible or something equally edifying. She should be selective about her visitors and should, for the most part, not receive a male visitor unaccompanied. Should she choose to receive a man socially, she should allow him no opportunity to declare himself to her. If he does so, she should take care not to offend him, but to reject him nevertheless and she should mention the incident to no-one; the 'ideal' woman is a silent one who laughs little and talks less, following St Paul (I Timothy, 2: 11-12). If a woman boasts of having rejected a potential lover, the world is more predisposed to believe her immoral for

having listened to such advances, or of boasting of her virtue to better disguise her wickedness.

Clearly the married life is strewn with pitfalls and the Woman who retains her virtue, her husband, her estate and her reputation in the 'ideal' world of courtesy literature is obviously the Woman to be emulated in real society. That is, of course, if she must be married, for the married state is secondary to virginity.

The Church was the predominant proponent of the 'ideal' state of virginity. We have already seen that the early Patristic writers extolled the glories of the virtuous state and encouraged parents to consecrate their daughters to God. Virginity or, at worst celibacy, freed the body from the taints of carnality and allowed the spirit to remain pure in order to move closer to God - he or she who enjoyed carnal love would be unable to love God completely. Consecrating a daughter to God not only ensured her salvation, but bought spiritual credit for her family and, more practically, obviated the need to provide her with a dowry. This meant that, should a family be so unfortunate as to have more than one daughter, the younger would often be forced to join the religious orders in order that the parents might settle a larger dowry on the elder/eldest daughter in the eternal quest for social aggrandisement. This, unfortunately, was the social reality for many aristocratic young women, whose lives we turn to now.

The average girl born into an aristocratic family had a life of obedience, subservience and often neglect ahead of her. As an infant, she was most usually given to a *nourrice* or wet-nurse until weaned. The Aristotelian rules of physiology were largely responsible for this phenomenon: believing that breast milk was blood which flowed from the womb, mysteriously whitened *en route*, encouraged the idea that breast feeding was debilitating to the mother. As such, very few aristocratic women breast-fed their children, a practice which continued up until the Eighteenth Century, when Marie-Antoinette was one of the first women to do so, after having read Rousseau. The child would then return to the family home where her education depended upon the beneficence of a male relative if it were to be anything other than

rudimentary. For the most part, however, a young woman's education extended as far as enough reading to read from the Scriptures, enough writing to make a copy of it and enough arithmetic to manage the household accounts.

The fundamentally feudal nature of France at this time meant that, for the average aristocratic family, life was an endless round of battle and dynastic alliance in an attempt to create a solid power-base. One of the easiest ways to achieve an alliance was through marriage and it was not uncommon for girls as young as eight to be promised in matrimony as a means of sealing an agreement with another family, although the marriage itself did not often occur, or was certainly not consummated, before the bride was at least twelve. Often this could prove a precarious venture for the aristocracy; infant mortality rates were high and family alliances foundered easily if there were no longer a prospective son or daughter-in-law. Moreover, if a family received another, more lucrative offer for their son, verbal contracts could be easily broken.

For the young woman, therefore, her existence and good fortune depended upon her family or her father's whim. The young marriageable aristocrat was guarded jealously: at a time when a marriage was considered binding enough if the young people exchanged private promises to one another, the impressionable young woman of good fortune had to be kept hidden from the prying eyes of the fortune-hunting opportunist who might try to seduce her. One convenient way to ensure this was to entrust the child to a convent order. Here, however, the nuns would endeavour to persuade their charge to take the veil, thus boosting their order and their coffers.

Life was therefore somewhat precarious for women and little changed throughout the Middle Ages and into the early Renaissance, other than a growing call for women to be better educated. If married, women had to assume all the duties and responsibilities listed above, trying to live the life of the 'ideal' woman in the real world of a brutal, male-oriented society. If entering the religious orders, she could expect to be subservient to the more senior members of the order, who were often

women dissatisfied with their lot, having been forced into the life of poverty and chastity by their parents before them.⁵³

How believable, then, in the face of what we know about the average aristocratic woman's lot, is it that a woman might achieve the 'ideal' of behaviour prescribed for her by men as the cumulative result of centuries of misogyny? It is our intention to show in the following chapters that the 'ideal' code of conduct propounded for the Woman was fundamentally unattainable for women in society and that the woman writer exposes the dichotomy between the 'ideal' and the real by appearing to uphold the former. We shall see that, by working within the literary parameters established by the canon, these women writers lend their arguments greater force by manipulating literary convention to a more reasoned, didactic end and that, in so doing, they establish a more realistic view of women and their potential place in society.

⁵³ Various texts have contributed to this description of the daily life of women during this period. The information contained in this section may be seen to be an amalgam of such sources as MacLean, *Woman Triumphant* and *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*; Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower*; Eileen Power, *Medieval Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), and *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Emilie Amt.

CHAPTER TWO

Example and Authority in selected works by Christine de Pizan.

*Certes, je dis que, quant ilz seront parfaiz,
que les femmes les ensuivront
(Livre de la Cité de Dames [218])*

Christine de Pizan is a unique figure in French literary history, not least because scholarly interest in her life and works over the years has created vastly diversified and, at times contradictory, opinions. She is generally acknowledged to have been the first woman in France to write out of financial necessity but judgements on her achievements range from moderate praise to outright eulogy. Various descriptions of her as 'the first professional woman writer of French literature',¹ 'precursor of the learned women of the French Renaissance',² 'An international cultural force',³ 'one of the outstanding writers of world literature',⁴ the most commonly-used phrase applied to Christine appears to be 'France's first woman of letters',⁵ coined in 1984 by Charity Cannon Willard and reiterated since in one form or another by many Christine scholars. The scope of scholarly activity on Christine de Pizan is as diverse as the opinions her works create, ranging from critical editions to translations to major conferences dedicated to the examination of one single aspect of her work.

That there should be such a broad spectrum of studies on Christine is scarcely surprising, given the sheer volume of her work, but although it is evident that the twentieth century has seen a remarkable upsurge of interest in this woman writer, there appears to be some disagreement over the history of academic study in this area. Enid McLeod writes of Christine that 'although she herself was widely known during her lifetime and remembered by her fellow writers in France in the sixteenth century, even

¹ Ester Zago, 'Christine de Pizan: A Feminist Way to Learning', in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright and Joan Bechtold (London: Peter Lang, 1990), 103-116 (p.103).

² Lula McDowell Richardson, *The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance from Christine de Pizan to Marie de Gournay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1929), p. 12.

³ Madeleine Perner Cosman, 'Christine de Pizan's Well-Tempered Feminism', in *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, ed. by Madeleine Perner Cosman, trans. by Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1989), 11-26 (p. 15).

⁴ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Earl Jeffrey Richards (London: Picador, 1983), p. xix.

⁵ Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984), p. 15.

her name was thereafter forgotten⁶ until the eighteenth century when, in 1787, Mademoiselle Kéralio published a *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages françois composés par des femmes*, in which the life and work of Christine de Pizan featured quite prominently. After this, McLeod states that the next academic interest in Christine's writings was not shown until 1838, when Raymond Thomassy produced his *Essai sur les écrits politiques de Christine de Pizan*. Thereafter, in 1882, E.-M.-D. Robineau published *Christine de Pizan: Sa vie, Ses oeuvres* and in 1886 Maurice Roy brought out a three-volume edition of Christine's poetic works. In 1911, Rose Rigaud commented that 'En 1717, Boivin de Villeneuve fait paraître [...] une vie de Christine qui fut pour celle-ci une véritable résurrection'⁷ and in 1927, Marie-Josèphe Pinet wrote that 'Au dix-septième siècle, le silence se fait sur Christine [...] Il faut arriver au dix-huitième siècle pour trouver quelques études littéraires sur ses ouvrages et quelques tentatives d'éditions'.⁸ Latterly, Glenda McLeod has stated that Christine, 'while she was not entirely forgotten during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, [...] was not generally read either',⁹ drawing on Willard's biography of the woman writer to make this assertion. Willard concurs that 'In general [...] such interest as there was in Christine [during the seventeenth century] centred around her biography of Charles V', but makes a stronger case for the existence of academic work on Christine in the eighteenth century, culminating in Mlle Kéralio's 1787 work.¹⁰ Conversely, Earl Jeffrey Richards argues that 'there is a remarkably continuous tradition of readers from her time to the present' and that 'The common prejudice that Christine [...] was

⁶ Enid McLeod, *The Order of the Rose: The Life and ideas of Christine de Pizan* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), p. 11.

⁷ Rose Rigaud, *Les Idées Féministes de Christine de Pizan* (Neuchatel: Imprimerie Attinger Frères, 1911), p. 22.

⁸ Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pizan: Etude Biographique et Littéraire* (Paris: Champion, 1927), p. xxi. See also Pinet, pp. xxi-xiv for a more thorough examination of work on Christine de Pizan up to the twentieth century and Suzanne Solente, 'Christine de Pizan' *Extrait de l'Histoire Littéraire de la France* XL (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1964).

⁹ *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Glenda K. McLeod (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1991), p. ii.

¹⁰ Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, pp. 220-1. Of Mlle Kéralio's work, Rigaud comments 'Cet ouvrage [...] témoigne de la part de son auteur d'une notable insuffisance dans la préparation historique, philologique et paléographique' and goes on to describe Thomassy's 1838 *Essai* as a 'panégyrique enthousiaste qui laisse peu de place à une appréciation nuancée' (pp. 22-4).

unknown from the end of the Pléiade to the early nineteenth century [is] factually wrong'.¹¹

Regardless of these divergences of opinion, the twentieth-century scholar coming to the work of Christine de Pizan can be sure that there is now considerable academic interest in this *femme auteur*. Charity Cannon Willard is, it might reasonably be said, one of the most prolific Christine scholars this century, along with Suzanne Solente. Willard's works cover almost every aspect of Christine de Pizan's literature, from biography to a critical edition of the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, and Solente has been responsible for the appearance in print of several critical editions, including the *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*. In 1984, Willard wrote of a 'considerable network of Christine scholars',¹² although she named only seven who were still living at that time. The study of Christine de Pizan is now a burgeoning field world-wide and new work is produced regularly.¹³

It becomes almost incredible, then, that *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, possibly the most widely reputed of Christine's works amongst recent scholars, remains unpublished in its Middle French form.¹⁴ It is on this text and on other selected prose writings that we shall base this examination of Christine de Pizan's use of example and authority in her narrative representation of women.

It would be well to begin by examining the life which has aroused so much academic activity. This century, biographies of Christine de Pizan have been produced by Marie-Josèphe Pinet and Suzanne Solente, as well as by Enid McLeod and, more

¹¹ Earl Jeffrey Richards, 'The Medieval "femme auteur" as a Provocation to Literary History: Eighteenth-Century Readers of Christine de Pizan' in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 102.

¹² Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, p. 10.

¹³ Bibliographies have been produced by Angus J. Kennedy and Edith Yenai. For more information, see Angus J. Kennedy, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1984; Supplement I, 1994) and Edith Yenai, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Author Bibliographies 63, 1989). Kennedy notes in the Introduction to Supplement I that his initial publication contained 502 items, dating from Christine's lifetime up until 1984. The supplement, covering only one decade between 1984 and 1994, contains 391 items. It must be noted here, however, that articles, particularly from the United States of America, outnumber major works on the author.

¹⁴ Maureen Curnow's critical edition of *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, produced as a thesis, is available on microfilm and as a Xerox (Michigan: Ann Arbor Microfilms, 1979).

recently, by Charity Cannon Willard.¹⁵ Pinet's study has been commended by Edith Yenai as 'a classic' (p.xxii) and is widely considered to be the most influential and comprehensive study of this woman writer from the first half of this century, while Solente's work is also very highly regarded. Of the two most recently published biographies of Christine de Pizan, both mentioned above, Willard's is more scholarly than Enid McLeod's. It is an excellent starting point for any interested reader and is generally regarded as an important document for those interested in background information, but it is not without supposition and conjecture. For our purposes, then, we shall restrict ourselves to the briefest biographical certainties.

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice *circa* 1364, the daughter of Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano. Tommaso was born in Bologna, his family from the village of Pizzano. He studied for his Doctorate of Medical Studies at the University of Bologna prior to moving to Venice to take up a university position there. Whilst in Venice, he was offered the position of court astrologer by both Charles V of France and Louis II of Hungary. Choosing the court of Charles V, in 1365 he moved to Paris, where his wife and daughter joined him in 1368. In 1380, aged 15, Christine was married to Etienne de Castel, a man ten years her senior who became a royal secretary the same year. The couple had three children: a daughter and two sons, one of whom subsequently died. The death of Charles V in September 1380 made Tommaso a less powerful man at court, his influence and affluent lifestyle waning until he died sometime in late 1387 or early 1388, making Etienne head of the family. Unfortunately, in late 1390 while in Beauvais with Charles VI, Etienne de Castel died suddenly, leaving his young widow with the responsibility of supporting their two children, her mother and niece. In addition, Christine found herself embroiled in several legal disputes over property to be inherited and monies due from her husband's estate. This litigation took approximately 14 years to be resolved, during which time Christine's family had to survive. Willard postulates that Christine may have supported her family by working as a scribe, as does

¹⁵ Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pisan*; Suzanne Solente, *Christine de Pisan*; E. McLeod *The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pisan*; Willard, *Christine de Pisan: Her Life and Works*.

Yenal. Willard goes further, however, in saying that she may have received financial assistance from acquaintances of her father,¹⁶ but this is unsubstantiated. It seems highly probable that Christine's daughter Marie entered the royal Dominican convent at Poissy in 1397,¹⁷ and that around the same time her son Jean was taken into the service of the Earl of Salisbury at his estate in England. Later, in 1406, the Duke of Burgundy would supply money for the marriage dowry of her niece. It was at some point during the 1390s that Christine began to write,¹⁸ presenting her works to powerful royal patrons in return for financial reward. As Solente states 'Ses écrits, dont elle offrait aux princes des copies, se répandirent en France et à l'étranger, et de puissants mécènes s'intéressèrent à Christine, qui leur dédia ses oeuvres' (p. 9). This she would continue to do, changing patrons as the political climate changed, until forced into exile from Burgundian and English factions, and taking refuge in the convent at Poissy during 1418. She remained there for the next eleven years at least,¹⁹ until her death somewhere between 1429 and 1434.²⁰

Chronological tables of works produced by Christine de Pizan have been provided by other scholars but, in order to trace her evolution into credible author, we shall examine one of the most significant episodes in Christine's early writing career.²¹ We have established that Christine began to write poetry for court consumption at some point between 1390 and 1395. In these works and in the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* (1399), she illustrated the dangers of courtly love and the often unjust treatment of

¹⁶ Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, pp. 43-5; Yenal, p.xvii.

¹⁷ Pinet comments 'Cela n'est impossible', (p.58), where Willard is more certain, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, p. 43.

¹⁸ Following Pinet, Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty suggest c. 1393 as the beginning of Christine's writing career. *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, ed. by Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford: Medium Aevum Monographs, 1977), p. 25. Pinet, (pp.32-4), notes the existence of some poetical works dated 1396 and Willard places Christine's first attempts at poetry c. 1394, but adds that Christine herself wrote that her 'literary career began' in 1399, although it is possible to date one of her poetical works in 1395, (Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, pp. 43-4).

¹⁹ In the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, completed July 1429, Christine writes 'Je, Christine, qui ay plouré XI ans en abbaye close'. (Kennedy and Varty, p. 28).

²⁰ There appears to be some disagreement over the date of Christine's death: Towner places it soon after July 1429, Curnow and Solente, before 1431. All base these assertions on a belief that Christine would not have allowed Joan of Arc's death to go unnoticed. We know, however, that she was dead by 1434, as she is mentioned as such by Guillebert de Mets in that year. For more information see: Sister Mary Louis Towner, *Lavision-Christine* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1932), p. 11; Solente, p.13; Curnow, p. 61 and Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, p. 207.

²¹ For a chronology of Christine's works, see Kennedy and Varty, pp. 25-6. For more discussion on exact dates of composition, see Pinet, pp.xix-xx and Curnow, pp. 1-13.

women at the hands of men who purported to be their servants and protectors. Her first major engagement in what would later re-emerge as the *Querelle des Femmes* came in 1401, when she became involved in a debate with Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Gontier Col and his brother Pierre over the *Roman de la Rose*. According to Robineau, Rigaud, Pinet and Willard, the dispute over Jean de Meung's continuation of Guillaume de Lorris's allegorical verse commenced during a meeting between Christine and Montreuil, during which the latter expressed the highest praise for de Meung's work. Initially a disagreement between Montreuil's appreciation of de Meung's erudition and Christine's disapproval of his licentiousness, the debate took on greater significance as more participants entered into the discussion. It is not our purpose to digress into a full account of the dispute which ensued,²² but the publication in 1402 of the letters exchanged between Christine and her opponents brought her name to public attention. Collating these missives into the *Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose*, Christine sent the resultant document to the Queen of France, Isabelle de Bavière, purportedly to bring a close to the debate by asking for the Queen's adjudication or intervention. Whether or not this was a concerted attempt on the part of this woman writer to increase her audience, it certainly made her name more widely known.

The result of this, Rigaud states, was that 'Lorsque, trois ou quatre ans plus tard, l'illustre femme reprit la querelle [...], elle n'était plus l'humble amateur de lettres' (pp. 75-6). Richardson too, claims that 'Christine, a mere woman [...] entered into the lists against authors whose reputations were already well established' (p.15). This would seem to imply that Christine was in the process of establishing her reputation as an author; a not inconsiderable undertaking, given the scholarly and literary *mores* of the time. In order to gain credibility as an author, Christine would have had to appropriate the established techniques and rhetorical devices which would mark her out as a woman writer who wished to be taken seriously.

²² For further details, see the account by Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, (pp. 73-89) and E.-M.-D. Robineau, *Christine de Pisan: Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres* (St Omer: Imprimerie Fleury-Lemaire, 1882), pp.302-56. See also Rigaud, pp.62-74 and Pinet, pp.64 - 87.

A.J. Minnis comments that in the latter part of this century 'in discussions of late-medieval literature, it has become fashionable to employ [...] critical terms which derive their meaning from modern, not medieval, literary theory'. He goes on to say that 'concepts from modern literary theory [...] have no historical validity as far as medieval literature is concerned' and advocates an 'historically valid and theoretically adequate' approach.²³ To avoid falling into anachronism, the application of any contemporary theory will be reserved until Chapter Four of this thesis. For the moment, in order to examine the ways in which Christine de Pizan established her authenticity as a (woman) writer by using established literary and rhetorical devices, we must first examine these devices in an appropriate historical context.

This thesis does not take as its basis the study of rhetoric and, as such, we shall restrict ourselves to a straightforward overview of this discipline, in order to establish the existence of some devices, or tropes, of which the woman writer may have made use. We will see that example is a vital rhetorical device, in its origins a tool for instruction. Similarly, the general pronoun used for the medieval writer will be masculine: as this thesis examines the ways in which two women writers can be seen to have manipulated the accepted literary norms, they must be seen as exceptional and will be marked out as such by the inclusion of a gender-based marker.

Cheryl Glenn argues that 'If rhetoric is the art of using language in such a way as to produce a desired impression upon the hearer (or reader), then the practice of rhetoric existed many hundreds of years before any rhetorical theory was codified, before rhetoric became a discipline' and cites the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the 'earliest examples [...] of purposeful and persuasive language use'.²⁴ However, rhetoric is commonly thought to have originated in the early part of the fifth century BC, developing out of legal disputes concerning the return of confiscated land after the fall of Trasibulus. This manner of debate developed as an art in Greece and evolved through use by the Sophists, Plato, Gorgias and Aristotle.

²³ A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar Press, 1984), p. 1.

²⁴ Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), pp. 19-20.

James J. Murphy summarises aspects of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 'the oldest extant textbook on the subject', thus:

Aristotle defines rhetoric in Book One as the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion; he then divides means of persuasion or proof into the artistic, or that furnished by the speaker, and the non artistic, or that furnished by external evidence. He names three kinds of persuasion: [1] *ethos*, arising from the speaker's personal qualities; [2] *pathos*, arising from the audience's emotions; and [3] logical proof, depending upon argument. [...] Since rhetoric is a counterpart of dialectic, the speaker may use *topoi* or "commonplaces," such as "pain or pleasure," to find arguments. [...] The chief inductive form of argument is example, which may be either historical or invented.²⁵

Example as a tool of argument or persuasion therefore relies upon the audience recognising the earlier specific example cited and inferring its general principle in order to understand its being applied similarly to a present case. Example is accessible, but to be effective, it must engage the audience's emotions since 'persuasion [...] is the goal of rhetoric'.²⁶ Cicero and Quintilian are probably the most widely-known of the earliest Roman exponents of the rhetorical tradition, 'following Aristotle in recommending example as a form of proof'²⁷ and bridging the gap between the pagan philosophers and the patristic writers. The Church Fathers, when structuring their responses to the accusations of barbarity levelled at the nascent Christian faith by Paganism, adopted rhetoric as a tool of argument and Renato Barilli comments that 'Christian literature [...] never so well applied the rules of rhetoric [...] as in the apologetics of the fathers',²⁸ although the patristic writers began largely to reject pagan figures in order to place greater emphasis upon the use of example from sacred history. In Boethius 'we see the beginning of an eclecticism that finds a place for all the great authors of antiquity' (p.42), initiating the use of argument drawn from sources other than the Scriptures. Barilli goes on to say that the rhetorical tradition persisted, even through the Dark Ages,

²⁵ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp.4-5.

²⁶ Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 6.

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 6.

²⁸ Renato Barilli, *Rhetoric*, trans. by Giuliana Menozzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 39.

to produce by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a refined set of precedents for the author to use (pp. 44-5). The dissemination in the thirteenth century of works by Aristotle previously unknown in the West contributed to the significance of the earliest thinkers, in tandem with ecclesiastical writings, as a source from which to draw argument and as a useful reserve of *topoi*, established as such by their repetition over the centuries. This fusion of writings from antiquity and from the Church as the basis for argument finds its earliest full expression in the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio, with whose writings Christine de Pizan was certainly familiar.²⁹

Petrarch's *Litterae de rebus familiaribus* and Boccaccio's *Origine, Vita, Studii e Costume del Chiarissima Dante*, were fundamental in establishing as acceptable the use of both pagan and Christian, ancient and modern authors, as authoritative or worthy of being drawn upon for validation. In his *De claris mulieribus* (1358-1374), Boccaccio's gallery of famous women included pagan women and characters from history as well as biblical figures, in this way diversifying the examples, or field of reference, for use by the writer.

Susan L. Smith notes the emergence, beginning in the late twelfth century, of a different form of example arising out of the revival of popular preaching. The rapid period of economic growth in Western Europe during the Middle Ages had created an increasingly prosperous lay society in which the Church no longer held complete control over access to education. In addition, the preoccupation with literary creation in the royal courts nurtured a burgeoning number of people writing in the vernacular and therefore outwith the sphere of influence of the clergy. Smith states that 'The revival of popular preaching [...] was one instance in which the church purposefully channelled its own speech in response to heterodox uses of language that were perceived to threaten moral and doctrinal orthodoxy'.³⁰ In so doing, the Church created a form of example designed to be more readily accessible to the lay audience. The resultant 'sermon exemplum', to use Smith's term, 'unlike the ancient-citational example [...]

²⁹ See Pinet, pp. 1-200 (Première Partie) and Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works*, passim.

³⁰ Smith, p. 15.

[was] always narrative in form, even if relatively brief' (p. 9) and tended not to focus upon a well-known figure from history, but upon 'types' of people.

Example, therefore, by the later Middle Ages could be found in three forms: the 'ancient-citational' which Smith states 'remained as current in medieval writing as it had been in antiquity' (p. 8), the figure taken from the authority of Christian tradition or from antiquity rewritten conforming to Christian morality, and the 'sermon exemplum', based upon the authority of experience in lay society.

It is evident, then, that authority and example are central to the art of the medieval author, but before we examine the use of authority and example by Christine de Pizan, we must first examine who, or what, could be considered authorial. Minnis states that 'In a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed'. He goes on to say that an *auctor* produced work which possessed *auctoritas*, defined by Hugutio of Pisa in around 1200 as a profound saying worthy of imitation or implementation, and that the term *auctor* was most commonly used in medieval terminology to denote a writer whose works were used by later scholars as 'sententious statements [...] or [...] literary models'.³¹ According to Minnis, to be an *auctor* implied that one's works were both intrinsically worthy and authentic; that is, conforming with Christian truth and produced by a named *auctor*. Put simply, 'the work of an *auctor* was a book worth reading; a book worth reading had to be the work of an *auctor*', but the validity of a work was tested over time, meaning that 'the only good *auctor* was a dead one' (p. 12). Thus, it can be seen that the medieval author had to invest himself with the authority to write by modelling his work upon, or by borrowing the *auctoritas* of, an earlier *auctor*. As Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens comment, 'the entire period was characterized by a highly self-conscious awareness of the necessity of establishing authority as a precondition to writing'.³² Similarly, the author could create

³¹ Minnis, p. 10.

³² *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Hanover and London: University of New England Press, 1989), p. 2.

authority from the use of example, drawing upon past sources from mythology, history, Scripture or invention, after Aristotle. Brownlee and Stephens also note that:

Although the Author was the originator of the work according to traditional medieval and early modern scholarship, he himself was not characterized by originality. Behind the Author stood his Sources: by a largely conscious process of imitation, adaptation and quotation the Author molded his new work. (p.1)

We have examined the transmission of opinion about women from antiquity through to the late Middle Ages in Chapter One, where we have already discussed the emergence and development of texts written for and about women. We shall not, therefore, reproduce that material here, but will instead turn our attention to the examination of selected prose works of Christine de Pizan. It will be shown that this woman writer worked within established literary parameters, writing in respected genres, adopting authority from earlier writers and making use of example from mythology, history and the Scriptures. This chapter contends, however, that Christine de Pizan can be seen as a subversive writer, adapting the literary and rhetorical tools she adopted from the canon in order ultimately to undermine the validity of canonical prescriptions for female behaviour. Where the majority of authors drew authority from the use of example to generalise about the nature of women and female behaviour, conversely, Christine de Pizan drew examples from existing authorities and used them to a pedagogic end. Ultimately, we will see that this *femme auteur* provides an alternative view of women and a more realistic code of conduct for women, based upon an acceptance of human frailty.

Given the volume of work produced by Christine de Pizan during her lifetime and the different literary styles she adopts, to attempt an examination of example, authority and narrative representation in her complete works would be a Herculean labour. To this end, we shall restrict our area of study in several ways: we shall examine only those texts devoted almost entirely to the portrayal of women. Further, we shall limit our examination almost exclusively to works of prose within this category. Jane Chance states that 'In the Middle Ages [...] a handful of women, often

associated with the court, began to write poems and works in the vernacular on topics outside the visionary autobiographical experience of the religious'.³³ Christine de Pizan began her career as a court poet and, with the exception of the *Epistre d'Othéa à Hector*, designed more as a manual for her 15 year-old son and, according to Yenal, more about ideals of knighthood than about women (p.xix), her literary output up until 1402 was exclusively poetical. It must be seen as significant, therefore, that Christine de Pizan turned to prose as her preferred medium after the publication in 1402 of the *Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose*, her first explicit engagement with the prevailing notion of Woman. Indeed, in the *Lavision-Christine* she comments that prose is her preferred medium for the discussion of 'plus haulte matiere', in comparison to the 'choses iolies [et] plus legieres' of her earlier works.³⁴ Additionally, of her prose works, only two deal explicitly with women and their place in society. Rigaud categorises the *Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose*, the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* and the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* as those works in which Christine discusses the arguments cited against women (p.32), but it is in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* that this discussion finds its fullest expression. Edith Yenal notes, 'it is the only writing in which she specifically asks for the right to an education for women' (p.xx), although we shall examine later the extent to which this statement is justified. We shall not examine Christine's part in the debate over the *Roman de la Rose*; whilst it is true that she offered a defence of women in her discourse with Montreuil and the Col brothers, these exchanges are, for our purposes, more accurately seen as part of an academic dispute. Similarly, whilst *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* is interesting as an historical document, we are not engaged in an examination of this woman writer as an historian, nor as a politician. We may therefore set aside her later prose works as, from her 1405 *Lettre à Isabeau de Bavière*, Christine's output was more concerned both with France's precarious political position and with the possibility of spiritual salvation arising out of religious

³³ Christine de Pizan, *Letter of Othea to Hector*, translated, with an Introduction, notes and interpretative essay by Jane Chance (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 1990; reissued Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), p. 1.

³⁴ *Lavision-Christine*, ed. Sister Mary Louise Towner (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1932), p. 164, II 6-11.

contemplation. We shall therefore focus our attention predominantly upon the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Livre des Trois Vertus*. Where we do refer to the *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, the *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, the *Lavision-Christine* and the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, we shall do so only to illustrate further Christine's methods and message. To that end, it would be well to begin by examining the various levels of authority with which Christine invests herself as an author in the *Livre de la Cité de Dames*.

Curnow has established that Christine drew from the following sources for the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: *Livre de Leſce* (Jean Le Fèvre de Ressons, c.1373); *De claris mulieribus* (Boccaccio, 1358-1374), translated as *Des cleres et nobles femmes*, (attributed to Laurent de Premierfait); *Decameron* (Boccaccio, 1348); *Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (Philippe de Mézières); *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (Boccaccio), translated as *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (Laurent de Premierfait); *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*; *Faits des Romains*; *Historia de Proeliis / Roman d'Alexandre*; *Metamorphoses / Ovid moralisé* (Ovid, 8 AD); *Grandes Chroniques de France*; *Speculum Historiale* (Vincent de Beauvais, c.1244), translated as *Miroir historial* (Jean de Vignay, c.1330); *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (Gautier de Coinci); *Bible*.³⁵ It is not our purpose here to compare each source with Christine de Pizan's *oeuvre*, but what we can reasonably conclude is that, if the writer wishing to invest himself with authority did so by invoking the *auctoritas* of earlier works, Christine created a solid foundation of authority gathered from all spheres; pagan lore, post-Greco-Roman European history, Christian scripture and Classical mythology. On a macrocosmic or intertextual level, this woman writer established herself as a natural successor to *auctores* widely read and greatly respected. Moving our examination of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* to a microcosmic or textual level, we shall discuss the layers of authority constructed by Christine de Pizan. Thereafter, we will examine how she might be seen to use authority as a tool of subversion.

³⁵ See Curnow, Chapter III (pp. 124-198) for a comprehensive study of Christine de Pizan's sources. Curnow illustrates convincingly that it is more probable that Christine worked from *Des Cleres et nobles femmes*, attributed to Laurent de Premierfait, than from the original *De Claris Mulieribus*. It has not proved possible to provide positive dates of publication or translation for all works.

In much the same way as she began to write poetry for court consumption according to established, structural rules, Christine modelled the structure of her work upon established texts. That she should create a 'gallery' is far from accidental; almost all of her source texts have an element of *amplificatio*, building up a series of examples taken from history to create a more powerful inductive proof: if, synecdochically, the truth of a general rule can be seen in a single example, the collection of many like examples together attempted to make an almost unassailable case.

In her structure, Christine drew mainly upon Le Fèvre, who composed the *Livre de Leësce* in around 1373 as a palinode to his own earlier translation of *Liber Lamentationum Matheoluli*, a text to which Christine frequently refers in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and which we will examine in greater detail later. Curnow states that 'Both Christine de Pizan and Jean Le Fèvre use the same basic pattern in their defence of women; each states the accusation, replies to it, and then gives female *exempla* to prove the positive argument'.³⁶ Thus we see that Christine appropriated source material, and that from those texts she adopted her method of argument. Significantly, the *Livre de Leësce* is not mentioned within the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. We shall see from this that Christine chose to use another, more explicit form of authority to justify herself on the written page.³⁷

Intra-textually, Christine de Pizan interweaves authority from several disciplines in her approach to the material, both implicitly and explicitly. Firstly, the very title of her work makes a deliberate allusion to Augustine's *Civitas Dei*. Secondly, and on a more explicit level, she uses the authority of Classical mythology and pagan history to justify the building of her 'city' by drawing deliberate parallels between her construction and the creation of Troy, Thebes and the Amazon nation [9-10]. That these examples have not survived the passing of the centuries does not undermine Christine's purpose, but serves rather to reinforce the Christian credentials already introduced in the title: Christine's 'city' will prevail because it is a Christian edifice.

³⁶ Curnow, p. 128.

³⁷ All references included in the main body of this text are references to Curnow's edition of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, as distinct from any other texts, which will be footnoted.

By promoting her work as one which will endure, Christine is attempting to confer authority upon herself in the present by anticipating her future *auctoritas*. At the same time, however, through the use of other established rhetorical tropes, she insures against being accused of pride. The invocation of St Thomas the Apostle [13a] may be viewed as illustrative of the tradition of excessive self-deprecation amongst medieval writers intended to flatter their prospective patron; by insisting upon her unworthiness to write, Christine shows appropriate Christian humility. Additionally, through the use of prosopopoeia, Christine de Pizan not only adopts the popular rhetoric of allegorical writing, but also establishes herself as a compiler, merely the mouthpiece of Dames Reason, Rectitude and Justice. In this way, by denigrating her status as a writer, she establishes within her text the primacy of earlier sources. Paradoxically, she validates this reliance on earlier texts by her introduction of the very text to which she ostensibly responds: if Matheolus can convince Christine, 'femme de hault et élevé entendement, digne d'onneur et de recommandations'³⁸ to despise herself for being born a woman, then the influence of the canon must be profound indeed. Matheolus himself, however, is dismissed as 'de nulle autorité' and as having 'aucune reputacion'; he is seen as representative of the canon which, 'generaument [...] tous traittiez philosophes, pouettes, tous orateurs [...] tous parlent par une meismes bouche' [1a]. It is this tendency to universalising generalisation that, as we shall see, Christine de Pizan refuses to accept. In order to reject an all-encompassing notion of women perpetuated by consecutive writers, Christine de Pizan used specific examples encompassing a wide variety of *auctores*.

In an attempt better to understand Christine's method by looking for any distinct pattern of selection within the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, we have categorised the examples of women used in the text according to the field of authority from which they were drawn. After close examination, we have concluded that there are four fields of authority used by Christine in this text. We make no claim to a definitive classification

³⁸ A description of Christine by Gontier Col, cited in Rigaud, p. 19.

of material, given that the boundaries between ancient pagan lore and classical mythology are at times indistinct, but we have chosen to define our categories thus:

1) **Classical Mythology**

For our purposes, we have used this term to denote a woman from history either already known to be a mythological figure, i.e. a named Goddess, or the sister/ daughter/ wife of a God; or a figure irrevocably linked to Classical myth, e.g. a servant of a God or Goddess.

2) **Pagan History**

This we have taken to mean all women taken from Pre-Christian History who are not to be found in Classical mythology. This category includes Greco-Roman history and female figures connected in some way to the early thinkers. We will not adopt a euhemeristic approach to the figures cited in the text; those women not explicitly mentioned in classical mythology will be deemed to fall into the category of pagan history.

3) **Post-Greco-Roman European History**

For our purposes, this category includes women taken from European history during the period following the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. The largest part of this category is taken up with recent or contemporary female figures from French history, but the use of characters taken from earlier history and from the history of other European nations, particularly Italy, necessitates this broader set of criteria for inclusion in this category.

4) **Christian Tradition / Biblical Exegesis**

This category encompasses female figures drawn from the Scriptures and from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Also included in this category are women whose predominant defining characteristic for Christine de Pizan was that they were Christian. In this way, the mother of Saint Augustine is included in this category: although she lived within the Roman Empire, she was a Christian and her inclusion in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is as a Christian.

All names are spelled as they are found in Curnow's critical edition of the work.³⁹

	CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY	PAGAN HISTORY	
PART ONE	Semiramis [55]; Des Amazones:— Lampheto, Marpasie, Synoppe, Thamaris, Manalippe, Ypolite, Orthia, Panthasselee, Anthioppe [58-63]; Camille [78];	Nicolle [42]; Cenobie [71]; Arthemise [74]; Lillie [76]; Veronice [79]; Cleolis [80]; Corniffie [83] Probe [84]; Sapho [85]; Pamphille [109]; Thamar [110]; Yrane [111]; Marcia [112]; Xampronie [114]; Gaye Cirile [118].	
PART TWO	Les Dix Seilles:— Persia, Libica, Delphica, Cimeria, Erophille, Erithee, Samia, Helespontine, Frigica, Tyburtine [124-7]; Nycistrate [139]; Cassandra [140]; Ysiphile [145] Argine [158]	'Plusieurs dames ensemble' [167]; Andromacha [171]; Penelope [191]; Dido [220]; Medee [221]; Tysbé [222]; Hero [223]; Yseult [227]; Dyamire [227]; Juno [229]; Europpe [231]; Jocaste [232]; Meduse [233]; Helaine [234]; Pollixene [235]	Anthoine [142]; Dripetruce [144]; Claudine [146]; 'une femme' [147]; Hypsistrate [155]; Triaire [156]; Arthemise [157]; Aggripine [159]; Julie [160]; Tierce Emulienne [162]; Xancippe [164]; Pompéye Pauline [165]; Sulpice [166]; Porcia [168a]; Curia [169]; 'une femme' [170]; Porcia [171]; la femme de Julius Cesar [171]; Julie [171a]; Cornelia [171a]; Anthoine [173a]; femme du roy Alixandre [173c]; les dames de Sabine [178]; Verturie [179]; Ortence [184]; Mariamire [192]; Antoine [193]; la fille de Marc Anthoine [193]; Sulpice [194a]; Lucrece [195]; la royne des Gausgres [196]; Sispone [197]; les dames de Sicambre [197a]; Virgine [198]; Othovienne [203]; Claudienne [203]; Fleurence [213]; Leonce [216]; Claudine [237]; Lucrece [240]; les dames de Romme [244]; Buse [245].
PART THREE			

³⁹ For the purposes of these tables, all names have been spelled as they are found in Curnow. However, in the main body of the discussion which follows, the MHRA style guidelines, 4.7, have been adhered to as far as is possible, using accepted English forms of classical names. Examples of the 'sermon exemplum' type have proven problematic. To this end, in the interests of consistency, where such examples are grouped together in the discussion, their original spelling has been retained. At all other times, accepted English spellings have been used, as found in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Richards.

PART ONE

post-GRECO- ROMAN EUROPEAN HISTORY	CHRISTIAN TRADITION/ BIBLICAL EXEGESIS
[la] voisine de Christine [31]; Fredegonde [43]; Blanche [44]; Jehanne [45]; la duchesse d'Orliens [46];	Blanche [47]; duchesse d'Anjou [48]; la contesse de la Marche [49]; Fredegonde [77]; Anastaise [113].
PART TWO Basine [141]; Gliselidis [148]; Crotilde [180]; Catulle [182]; sainte Genevieve [182]; Nouvelle Andry [185]; Christine de Pizan [186]; les Lombardes [199]; Bruneheut [208]; Gliselidis [209]; la femme Bernabo [215]; Scismonde [224]; Lisabeth [226] 'une autre' femme [227]; la dame du Fayel [227];	Marte [33]; la mere de saint Augustin [33a]; Probe [84]. Delborah [134]; Helisabethe [135]; Anne [136]; la royne Saba [137]; la Vierge Marie [174]; Thermich [175]; Athalis [208] Judich [176]; Hester [177]; sainte Genevieve [182]; Susane [187]; Sara [188]; Rebeca [189]; Ruch [190]; Jesabel [208].
PART THREE	Marie [261]; les suers Nostre Dame [263]; Marie Magdalaine [263]; sainte Katherine [264]; sainte Marguerite [266]; sainte Luce [268]; Martine [269]; sainte Luce [270]; sainte Agathe [270]; sainte Benoitte [271]; sainte Foste [272]; sainte Justine [273]; Eulalie [274]; sainte Martre [275]; sainte Foy [276]; Marcienne [277]; sainte Eufante [278]; Theodosine [279]; sainte Barbre [280]; sainte Dorothee [281]; sainte Cecille [282]; sainte Agnés [282]; sainte Agathe [282]; sainte Christine [283]; Felix [285]; Julite [286]; Blandine [287]; sainte Maryne [288]; Euffrosine [289]; Anastaise [291]; trois vierges:- Agappe, Chione, Hirene [292]; Theodorie; sainte Nathalie; sainte Affre [297]; Drusienne [298]; Susane [299]; Maximille [300]; Epigene [301]; une autre bonne dame [302]; Helaine [303]; Paucille [304]; Baselice [305].

It is immediately apparent that Christine de Pizan drew upon all available sources of authority for her female examples in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Closer examination reveals that this woman writer also made use of all established forms of example: the 'ancient-citational' example is well-represented, with 51 figures taken from classical mythology and 56 from pagan history. Examples from the authority of Christian tradition outnumber either of these categories, with 63 women cited. The 'sermon exemplum', too, is utilised by Christine de Pizan and can be found in all of the four categories: 'plusieurs dames ensemble' [167] – Classical Mythology; 'une femme' [170] – Pagan History; 'une autre' femme [227] – post-Greco-Roman European History; 'une autre bonne dame' [302] – Christian Tradition. One might argue that Christine de Pizan created a 'type' of her own invention by classifying Agape, Chionia and Irene as 'trois vierges' [292], but the case made by this woman writer for the power of virginity will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is not insignificant that women from Christian tradition should outnumber female examples from the other authorities; we have already mentioned that Christine established her 'Christian credentials' in the opening pages with her invocation of St Thomas and her allusion to Augustine's *Civitas Dei*. This is further reinforced by her imploring prayer to God [2] and the portrayal of Dames Reason, Rectitude and Justice as the daughters of God [6]. One might conjecture that this emphasis upon Christianity be seen in two ways: as an indication of this woman writer's personal faith, and also as a bulwark against potential accusations of dissidence where her depiction of women deviated from canonical orthodoxy. This must, however, remain speculative, for it would be anachronistic to impose authorial intention upon the woman writer where there exists no explicit evidence.

The woman from Christian tradition is the first specific example used in the *Livre de la Cité de Dames* and it is in Christine's employment of Eve and the Virgin Mary that we find the first explicit expression of what Madeleine Pelner Cosman described as 'Christine de Pizan's Well-Tempered Feminism'.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor*, trans. by Charity Cannon Willard, ed. by Madeleine Pelner Cosman (New York: Bard Hall Press/ Persea Books, 1989), Introduction, p. 11.

'Se aucun veulst dire que il fu banis par femme ou cause de dame Eve, je di que trop plus hault degré a acquis par Marie qu'il ne perdi par Eve' [29]: where Eve is evil incarnate, Mary is virtue personified. Christine de Pizan no more denies Eve's sin than she uses the mother of Christ to exonerate all women from vice. Instead, by juxtaposing these two diametrically opposed biblical women, she effectively defines them as existing at the negative and positive ends of the female spectrum, creating a neutral space for all other women to occupy. Christine de Pizan undermines the validity of canonical pronouncement by refusing to universalise the sin of Eve or the virtue of Mary to all women. We shall see that this subtle process of subversion is sustained throughout the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, expressed through her manipulation of the examples she selected.

To attempt an analysis of each of the 206 specific examples cited by Christine de Pizan in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* would be a lengthy process. Nor would it necessarily be a profitable one, given the very occasionally vague and insubstantial nature of Christine's references, e.g. 'une femme' [170]; 'les Lombardes' [199]. In keeping, therefore, with the subject matter of this thesis, we shall adopt a similarly synecdochical approach to our analysis and restrict our examination of the text to several particularly pertinent examples. In this way, we shall be in a position to draw general inferences about the nature of the manipulation that Christine de Pizan effected in her narrative. These inferences will, in turn, be used as illustrative of Christine de Pizan's overall project for, as we shall see, Christine de Pizan undermined the prevailing notion of a universalised Woman to create a more realistic presentation of women. Having once established this more realistic image of women, based upon an acceptance of human frailty, Christine de Pizan then attempted in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* to create a more realistic code of conduct for women, based upon an acknowledgement of the double standards at work in a patriarchal society.

Smith notes that 'the instability that lies at the heart of the argument from example...[is] the capacity of the example to be read differently',⁴¹ commented upon by

⁴¹ Smith, p. 28.

Ambrose in *De Paradiso* and by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*. Christine de Pizan capitalised on this instability in her manipulation of her selected examples. Sheila Delany describes this process as 'rewriting woman good',⁴² but we would contend that this is a misleading description of Christine's design. Were this woman writer to have taken accepted 'evil' or 'bad' female examples from authority and rewrite them as having been exclusively virtuous and good, she would have been guilty of precisely the same universalising generalisation that it is our contention she rejected. Rather, Christine's adapted examples occupy the space between the two poles set up by Eve and Mary, where 'real' women, neither exclusively evil nor exclusively virtuous, might be expected to be found.

Much has been made of Christine de Pizan's apparent rewriting of history.⁴³ Richards states that Christine 'insist[ed] on a provocative continuity of women's achievements, not just because it was a matter of historical truth, but also because it allowed her to view pagan history as anticipating typologically Christian history'.⁴⁴ Later, he postulates that 'Christine radically questions earlier misogynist representations of women by having women represent all humanity allegorically' (p. 28), that 'using the female to allegorize the human constitutes nothing less than a stunning innovation on Christine's part' (p. 29), and that therefore 'the City of Ladies becomes a symbol for the transcendence of human multiplicity' (p. 29). These remarks, while certainly stimulating, must be seen as part of the recent erroneous trend among Christine scholars to overestimate anachronistically the extent of Christine de Pizan's feminism. Yenal describes the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* as her 'most explicit feminist piece [which] has probably contributed more to Christine's reputation as a feminist than any other single

⁴² Sheila Delany, 'Rewriting Woman Good: Gender and the Anxiety of Influence in Two Late-Medieval Texts', in *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 74-87 (p. 74).

⁴³ See Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine de Pizan's Cité des Dames* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 69-103; *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Earl Jeffrey Richards (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 48-62; Sheila Delany, 'History, Politics, and Christine Studies: A Polemical Reply', in *Politics, Gender & Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Margaret Brabant (Boulder, San Francisco & Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 193-206 and Earl Jeffrey Richards, 'Christine de Pizan and Sacred History', in *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Margaret Zimmerman and Dina De Rentiis (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1994), pp. 15-30.

⁴⁴ Richards, *Christine de Pizan and Sacred History*, p. 28.

work'.⁴⁵ It is our opinion that the radical nature of Christine de Pizan's writing lies in the fact that it is not radical in twentieth-century terms. In approaching and examining all aspects of Christine de Pizan's departures from canonical orthodoxy, we must bear in mind Rigaud's statement that 'seule l'inconcevable ignorance des féministes modernes leur permet de se réclamer d'un auteur dont l'oeuvre, au contraire, "condamne" formellement le mouvement actuel d'émancipation' (p. 15). The inappropriate and misplaced imposition of twentieth-century theoretical constructs impairs and, at times precludes the possibility of appreciating the subtlety of Christine de Pizan's work and has led to such anachronisms as the assertions that Christine was 'the first female literary theorist'⁴⁶ and that 'she offered a radical and innovative feminist mythography – the genealogy of the mother that would rebuild a new society'.⁴⁷ Christine de Pizan establishes a female mythography in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, but in order to examine its 'radical' or 'feminist' nature, we must first examine more closely the nature of what Delany describes as 'a tedious performance in its relentless recital of female excellence'.⁴⁸ Of this seemingly revisionist approach, Delany also comments:

Does Christine flatten out contradictions in her version of womanhood? She does. Does she skew the tradition, omit what is unsuitable to her purpose, rationalise aberrant behaviour? Certainly. Are her figures realistic, balanced or contradictory characters? By no means. (p. 84)

We would contend, however, that Christine de Pizan chose rather to use a combination of manipulation and judicious editing, rather than to rewrite completely the examples she offered. As a women writer appropriating examples from earlier authorities, Christine was fully cognisant of the accepted, traditional narrative of each tale and to contradict totally the earlier version of events would be effectively to divest herself of the authority she appropriated from established *auctores*. This would

⁴⁵ Yenai, p. xx.

⁴⁶ Chance, *Letter of Othea to Hector*, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pp. 21-2.

⁴⁸ Delany, *Rewriting Woman Good*, p. 84.

therefore be self-defeating. More importantly, Christine's readers would also undoubtedly have been familiar with the accepted rendition of the more well-known examples. We would assert that the assumption of this knowledge in the reader was part of Christine's overall strategy: rather than attempt to negate totally the accepted example of an evil woman with a diametrically opposed positive image, Christine placed her edited examples in the space between the two poles. Rather than attempt to create a version of history which would be dismissed as inaccurate by the canon, this woman writer tempers misogynist tradition through skilful editing and manipulation. In the same way that she creates an alternative, realistic female space between the poles of Good and Evil, Christine de Pizan creates an alternative, not oppositional, version of history.

We have noted above that Christine de Pizan borrowed her structure from the *Livre de Léesce* and elements of her material from Boccaccio but opinions vary as to her dependence upon, or deviation from, her earlier sources. It would be well, therefore, to sketch here through a brief examination of several narratives from the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* her reliance upon or rejection of the *auctores* by whom she invested herself with *auctoritas*. Pinet states that 'si les biographies d'un grand nombre des femmes citées par Christine sont citées également par Boccacce, elles ne lui sont généralement pas fournies par lui. Elle les connaissait par ailleurs' (p.364). Given the number of potential sources ascribed to Christine's *Livre de la Cité des Dames* by Curnow, noted above, it is not unreasonable to support this assertion – Boccaccio was certainly one of Christine's sources, but he was not her only one and although Christine de Pizan relates the histories of many women who appear in *De mulieribus claris*, these myths, legends and tales were by no means exclusive to the Boccaccio text. Constance Jordan comments that 'In case after case, Boccaccio's accounts of the strength, wit and resourcefulness of women are rendered deeply ironic by reference to female garrulousness, avarice and lust'.⁴⁹ The same could certainly not be said of Christine,

⁴⁹ Constance Jordan, 'Boccaccio's In-Famous Women: Gender and Civic Virtue in *De mulieribus claris*', in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), pp. 25-47 (p. 26).

but the barest 'facts' of her narrative pay tribute to her earlier sources. Christine manipulates the tales she tells in three ways: i) she retains the accepted version of the legend related, but subverts the narrative by altering or attributing new motives to the woman depicted; ii) she edits out, in varying degrees, elements of the histories she depicts; iii) she remains faithful to earlier versions of events, but includes these female figures in categories of her own invention, for her own ends.

Christine lays the first stone of the *Cité* with the example of Semiramis. Traditionally the mythical founder of the Assyrian empire, she was the daughter of the fish-goddess Derceto and built, amongst other things, the hanging gardens of Babylon. Christine omits this information; her Semiramis is 'femme du roy Ninus', 'en qui habondoit tres hardi courage' [55], who leaves her chamber with one side of her hair unbraided to quell an insurrection. Christine however does not omit to mention that Semiramis married her son Ninus, but accounts for this 'pour ce que adonc n'estoit encores point de loy escript: ains vivoyent les gens a loi de nature' and attributes Semiramis's motives to political gain for her son. Quilligan states that:

There are problems with choosing Semiramis as the initial story. The first is that Christine thereby quite strangely bases her city on one of the most scandalous foundations in the field of letters: mother/ son incest. Semiramis's fame as a warrior and city builder was surpassed only by her notoriety for having committed incest with her son. (p. 70)

Sheila Delany, however, claims that the 'erotic component of this legend was introduced by several of the church fathers',⁵⁰ although she does not state which of the patristic writers introduced this component. She contends too that 'it does not appear in classical accounts [...] and is not repeated by every medieval author', citing Ranulf Higden and Alain Chartier. Delany explains Christine's inclusion of the incestuous relationship by stating that 'Christine preferred to show extenuated guilt', and goes on to say that she plans 'to speculate elsewhere on why she so chose'.⁵¹ Perhaps it would be appropriate for us to offer here the notion of Christine de Pizan's introduction of the

⁵⁰ Sheila Delany, 'History, Politics, and Christine Studies: A Polemical Reply', in *Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Margaret Brabant (Boulder, CO & Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 193-206 (pp.193-4).

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.194.

erotic element of Semiramis's legend as being completely in keeping with her overall strategy. By offering the 'unabridged' version of events, Christine aligns herself with the authority of the Church Fathers. At the same time, by attributing Semiramis's motives to a morally acceptable end whilst remaining within the established parameters of the legend, by adaptation rather than omission she initiates the possibility of alternative interpretation throughout the rest of the text. Moreover, Christine presents a balanced image of a woman whose actions, while morally dubious, arise out of a maternal desire to advance her son. By refusing to accept a universalised version of events, something she achieves in this instance by manipulating her female figure's motivation, Christine de Pizan implicitly invites the reader to reconsider all their preconceived, universal 'truths'.

Another significant manipulation is found in Christine de Pizan's depiction of the Amazons, mythical warrior females. They are warrior women in Christine's text, but have become so out of necessity and revenge after 'tous avoyent perduz leurs maris et freres' [57]. Here again, Christine adapts the accepted mythology by redefining the reasons for the actions she presents. Her Amazons are not by nature barbaric or bloodthirsty, they have been forced to adopt the masculine role in the absence of their male partners— 'elles [...] prisrent conseil [...] et en conclusion deliberent que de la en avant par elles maintindrent leur seigneurie'. The Amazon women can be seen in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* as the exposition of one of Christine de Pizan's major themes in her attempt to revise the prevailing notion of Woman: these women have the ability to assume an aggressive masculine role, as is evidenced by their success and prowess, but they have only needed to do so because circumstances have dictated that they should. Indeed, throughout the text as a whole, Christine emphasises that any aggressive female behaviour portrayed is excusable only when dictated by necessity, if motivated out of revenge for the death of a male relative, or if seeking to avenge the honour of oneself or one's family. We shall explore Christine's attitude towards this aspect of female behaviour in more detail below, and for the moment restrict ourselves to a few examples indicative of acceptable motives for female aggression: Marpasia and

Lampheto 'moult bien vengirent la mort de leurs maris' [57]; Synoppe 'fut sa mere [...] grandement vengée' [57a]; and Thamiris' bloody decapitation of Cyrus is justified by his aggression and 'cruauté' [59].

Moving from those myths and legends fully 'factually' recounted, but manipulated in terms of the motivations attributed to the historical figures depicted therein, let us examine Christine's practice of editing out material apparently at odds with her purpose. Christine's version of the myth of Medea, along with those of Dido and Zenobia, are possibly the most heavily edited of all her examples, more examples of what Glenda McLeod and Katharina Wilson have described as 'sophisticated [...] informed and selective reading[s] of tradition'.⁵² Christine's Medea is mentioned twice [89 & 221]; [89] will be discussed in the next category of this catalogue of subversion, but in [221], however, we see Christine's editorial hand at work explicitly, categorising Medea with women who remained constant in their love until death, 'celles qui jusques a la mort y ont perseveré' [219b]. In Christine's edited narrative, Medea does indeed help Jason to secure the Golden Fleece and is subsequently abandoned by him, leaving her 'desespere'. What Christine chooses to omit, leaving the barest accepted 'facts' of the mythology, is Medea's 'terrible'⁵³ revenge – her murder of Jason's second wife, Creusa, and of her own two sons by Jason [89]. This particular attempt to subvert the authority of mythography is compounded by Christine's attempt to manipulate Jason's motives for seeking out the Golden Fleece. She edits out of her version the fact that Jason's quest was imposed upon him by his uncle Pelias, choosing instead to depict Jason as 'desireux d'accroistre de mieulx en mieulx sa renommee'. The result of this is, according to Quilligan, that Medea is presented as 'an exemplar of the same kind of generosity Dido extends to Aeneas, another woman receiving in return a mendacious ingratitude' (p.174).

Dido, too, is spoken of twice in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* [119 & 220]; [119] will be discussed below as an unexpurgated narrative included under a category

⁵² Glenda McLeod and Katharina Wilson, 'A Clerk In Name Only – A Clerk In All But Name: The Misogamous Tradition and *La Cité des Dames*, in *The City of Scholars*, pp. 67-76 (p. 76).

⁵³ H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 187.

of Christine's invention. For our purposes, then, we shall consider Christine's 'edition' of the Dido/ Aeneas legend as another example of her overarching attempt to create an alternative history more favourable to women.

Brumble notes the existence of two versions of the legend of Dido: the first, begun in Justinus's *Epitoma historium Philippicarum*, portrayed Dido as the ideal of widowed chastity, who threw herself on her husband's funeral pyre and was described by Tertullian as the model of pagan chastity; Brumble goes on to say, however, that 'she was more commonly remembered in Virgil's version' (p.101) as the lover of Aeneas who, after his departure, threw herself on a pyre out of grief. Christine's Dido does indeed fall in love with Aeneas and is devastated by his departure, but what Christine chooses to omit from the legend is the fact that Aeneas was made to leave by Mercury, sent by the Gods to remind Aeneas of his duty to found Rome. Christine's Aeneas 's'en ala sans congíe prendre de nuit en recellee traytreusement, sans le sceu d'elle; et ainsi paya son hoste' [220a]. Dido's suicide is retained, but once again Christine provides an alternative version of events; Dido 'se gitta en un grant feu que fait alumer avoit. Et autres dient que elle se occist de la meismes espee de Eneas' [220a]. The most basic facts of the Virgilian version have been retained, but the reason for Aeneas's departure has been edited out and, in selecting the *Aeneid* as the basis for this narrative, Christine implicitly edits the Justinus text out of her history. Quilligan states that 'in her use of the story of Dido's love affair with Aeneas, Christine presents an entirely different version from that found in Boccaccio, who ignores Virgil' (p. 172) and, as such, Christine can be seen to diverge from the *auctoritas* of Boccaccio. We have already mentioned that Boccaccio was not Christine de Pizan's sole source of authority and, given Jordan's observations that *De mulieribus claris* 'is not epideictic in any sustained and direct manner, but rather pervasively critical' and that 'It is important to realise how devious Boccaccio's rhetorical strategies actually are, how subtly he subverts his own stated intentions', it is appropriate that Christine should cite an alternative version of history. By adopting and adapting the more widely-used myth, Christine appropriates the *auctoritas* of Virgil and, through the omission of certain

aspects of the *Aeneid*, creates an implicitly Christian morality tale: she who loves inappropriately will be punished.

Zenobia [71], 'contraint par ses parens prist a espoux le roy des Palmurenes', with whom she fights side by side. This depiction of Zenobia, according to Quilligan, is representative of 'Christine's legitimization of female martial power as an outgrowth of mothering' (p. 92). As in Christine's narrative of Medea, Zenobia's ultimate downfall at the hands of Aurelian is edited out of her history, 'a conclusion that Christine suppresses entirely' (p. 93). Christine's Zenobia is a woman who would have remained a virgin, were it not for the political marriage forced upon her by her parents. A military helpmeet to her husband, she successfully assumes the masculine role after his death. Significantly differing from earlier masculine narrations, not only does Christine de Pizan permit Zenobia to avoid the indignity and disgrace of defeat, she also describes her as 'tres aprise en lettres' [73]. Another incidence of Christine de Pizan's selective editing is found in the example of Xanthippe. No mention is made in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* of Xanthippe's 'famously shrewish'⁵⁴ disposition and Christine omits the infamous chamber pot incident from her text [164]. The only vessel Xanthippe casts is the poisoned cup from which her husband Socrates is about to drink. This constitutes a reasonably significant departure from tradition, albeit on a small scale, given the relatively short length of Christine's narrative. Brumble comments of Xanthippe's continual ill-treatment of her husband that 'In some accounts Socrates bore this all so well that he became an *exemplum* of patience' (p. 353), where in Christine's *Livre* he is depicted as the model of Stoic apathy. It would not be misplaced to conjecture here that this narrative is less about Xanthippe than about female behaviour: included to refute the suggestion that 'les femmes heent leurs maris quant ilz sont vieux et aussi que elles ne aient pas hommes de science' [160], one might question whether the example of Xanthippe succeeds in its stated aim, given the prevailing perception of Xanthippe's disposition. We would contend that Christine intends her edition of history to be seen as part of her continuous process of illustrating an alternative view of

⁵⁴ Brumble, p. 353.

history, and as an exhortation to women to emulate the stoic apathy of classical figures. The classical legend of Penelope is a minor example in Christine's gallery of subversion. Some versions of the history of Penelope charge her with being the mother of Pan by Hermes and contend that Ulysses repudiated her. Christine omits these additions from her version and her Penelope is 'dame moult vertueuse' [191]. Brumble notes of the eroticised version that 'this was not widely accepted' (p. 265) and Christine therefore aligns herself with the Church Fathers in her depiction of the chaste ideal.

While these are significant editions of canonical orthodoxy, they are not exceptional as being subversive within the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, and many of the other gynocentric histories recounted by Christine de Pizan vary by degrees in their omission or subversion of accepted mythology, as noted above. Let us therefore examine selected examples of Christine's third method of subversion: the retention of fact, manipulated to serve Christine's purpose. One such example is found in Fredegund, mentioned twice [43, 77]. Fredegund, Christine admits is 'cruelle', but emphasises that this is 'oultre loy naturelle de femme'[43]. Christine's Fredegund is validated by ensuring the succession of her son 'par grant sçavoir', by assuming the masculine role after the death of her husband Chilperic and making peace between the feudal barons [43]. In [77], she is depicted as a combination of woman and warrior, leading her armies into battle 'son filz a mamelle'. Blamires notes that Christine follows the *Grandes Chroniques de France* in attributing the peacemaking action to Fredegund, not to Blanche of Castille and comments that 'competing traditions were evidently available'.⁵⁵ It is not unreasonable to conclude that, by drawing on an extant source, Christine is once again attempting to create a more balanced image of woman admitted to be 'cruelle' but proven to be not completely so, as evidenced by her love for her son. Medea, along with Dido, is one of two figures whose histories are represented without omission in their first appearances in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. In [89], Medea is included amongst 'aucunes dames qui furent enluminees de grant science' (.xxviiij.) as a

⁵⁵ Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 179 n. He notes too, however, that in a letter to Isabella of Bavaria in 1405, Christine attributes the peacemaking to Blanche, as she urges Isabella to similarly intercede.

woman who 'de sçavoir [...] passa et exceda toutes femmes'. Christine de Pizan does not deny that Medea was a sorceress, but prefers to present 'l'art de son enchantement' as the fruits of knowledge. In [119], Christine presents an uncensored version of Dido's history according to Justinus, up until and including the building of Carthage. In this, Dido's marriage to Sychaeus, his eventual slaughter at his brother-in-law Pygmalion's hands, Dido's flight to Tyre and the subsequent construction of Carthage are fully recounted. Dido is presented here as part of a debate between Christine and Dame Reason on prudence, a capacity Christine stresses 'vient par nature a homme et femme' [115a]. Quilligan comments that Christine 'explicitly postpones the rest of Dido's story [...] though of course all readers would have known that Dido [...] suffered betrayal' (p. 103). This postponement is not problematic if we remember that in [119] Christine follows Justinus, where in [220] she borrows from Virgil. By appropriating Justinus's exemplary Dido and selectively borrowing from Virgil, Christine creates in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* as a whole, a more well-rounded history of a woman capable of unimpeachable government but as prone to temptation as any other human. In this brief overview, let us examine one more manipulation of history narrated to suit Christine's ends which is found in the tale of Judith [176]. Christine includes, in some detail, a description of the decapitation of Holophernes where Judith 'sans paour [...] trencha a Olophernes la teste sans que de nul fust ouye' [176b], but it is in her authorial intention that this woman writer diverges from the canon. Judith is included as a saviour of the Jews, inspired by God who 'comme il vouldst sauver l'umain lignage par femme, vouldst [...] yceulx autresi secourir et sauver par femme' [176]. Judith is therefore precursor of Christianity, warrior woman and military leader for Christine's purposes. Judith is also 'noble dame vesve' who was 'encore jeune femme [...] et moult belle, mais encore trop plus chaste' [176a], but it is her capacity for heroic action rather than her chastity which is emphasised. In noting Judith's virtue, Christine de Pizan aligns herself at the most basic level with the patristic writers, for whom Judith was a model of widowed chastity, but by including her under the heading of 'les grants biens qui par femmes sont avenues' [174], Christine creates a

more three-dimensional image of a woman capable of both stoic chastity and heroic action.

It is not our purpose to examine here in detail the ramifications of every one of Christine's divergences from tradition, but we may permit ourselves to conclude from the selection of examples examined here above that Christine has appropriated literary, historical, mythical and biblical examples and that she has adapted them through omission, judicious editing or manipulation. That she does so is therefore evident, what we must now examine is to what end?

Upon closer textual examination, it is possible to see that examples are grouped together for a specific purpose and that the examples in these clusters tend to be taken from the same category, in a strategy whose ultimate goal is to undermine the overall validity of canonical pronouncements on the universalised nature of Woman. This is achieved through the use of interrogative, female dialogue: Christine questions Dames Reason, Rectitude and Justice as to the validity of each charge laid against Woman. The Virtues respond to each accusation with an alternative explanation, succeeded by a number of examples to prove their argument. The style of discourse adopted in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, according to Curnow 'reflects the legal language and style of her period' (vol. 1, p. 250) and is by no means original for Christine, several of whose earlier works include an allegorical courtroom scene (*Le Chemin de long estude*) or some form of adjudication (*Le Débat des deux amants*). Pinet states that Christine de Pizan first adopted the judicial juxtaposition of accusation and counter-argument in one of her letters to Pierre Col, where she chose to 'reprend[re] point par point les arguments de son contradicteur' (pp. 78-9). It is hardly surprising that, given her lengthy involvement in courtroom dispute after the death of her husband, Christine de Pizan should have become familiar with juridical debate. That she chose to adopt a quasi-legal style and tone in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is a natural consequence of this familiarity; as Curnow notes 'In choosing this type of vocabulary, Christine is constantly reminding the reader that she is presenting a defense of women' (p. 250). However, Christine chooses also to adapt this style of debate as, in some instances,

there is no specific allegation to precede the examples offered. This is the case with the Ten Sibyls [124-7], who are inscribed in the text as prophets of God and precursors of Christianity. Later Thermutis, Judith, Esther [175-7], grouped together and taken from Christian Tradition; The Sabine Ladies [178] and Verturia [179], cited from Pagan History; Clotilda [180] and Catulla [182], taken together from post-Greco-Roman European History, are included under the heading 'Du grant bien qui est venu au monde et vient tous les jours pour cause de femmes' (.xxx.). These examples are more problematic than the Sibyls as, although they are not presented in response to a specific accusation, they are offered as a belated response to the misogynist generalisation that 'ses hommes dient qu'il n'est mal qui par [femmes] ne viengne' [174]. These examples should, however, be more accurately seen as part of Christine de Pizan's continuing strategy in adapting the legal style of debate: this implicit question to Rectitude is prefaced by Christine's statement that 'je voy infinnis biens au monde venus par femmes' [174] which can be seen as a quasi-legal summation of the examples cited in response to the accusation that men are foolish to follow their wives' advice. However, by inserting 'toutesvoyes' Christine anticipates potential reader response: concession precedes progression, and by having her literary self concede that it is possible for women to have performed good deeds, but that 'toutesvoyes' the prevailing notion of evil Woman remains, Christine exposes the blinkered rigidity of canonical orthodoxy. In so doing, she introduces the possibility of progressing to an alternative view propounded by the Virtues and therefore validated by the sacred status of these daughters of God. Similarly, the examples of Juno, Europa, Jocasta, Medusa, Helen and Polyxena [229-235], all taken from Classical Mythology, are included later in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, not in reply to a specific accusation, but as examples 'qui ont esté au monde moult renommes pars divers accidens plus que par grans vertus' [229]. Dame Rectitude comments too that 'comme de toutes dyre entrepris n'aye et seroit inffini procès me souffist sans plus que je produise en temoinage pour contredit a ce que tu m'as proposé que aucuns hommes dient'. Christine here reinforces her message of moderation – 'aucuns hommes' are guilty, but not all. By this intra-textual

reflexivity, repeating her earlier assertions, Christine might be seen to contradict Lucien Foulet when he said:

Le moyen âge n'a pas connu, en grammaire et en syntaxe, cette passion raisonnante et raisonneuse qui nous possède [...] Nous ne sommes jamais trop pressés pour revenir sur nos pas et analyser le cas: le moyen âge pousse droit devant lui. Il applique volontiers le principe du moindre effort.⁵⁶

In the structure of her discourse and argument Christine de Pizan could certainly not be said to make little effort. Reiterating the rejection of generalisation in her regular pseudo-judicial summations is a significant tool in Christine's attempt to expose the prevailing notion of Woman as erroneous within the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Isabella of Bavaria [248], the Duchess of Berry [249], Valentina Visconti [250], the Duchess of Burgundy [251], the Countess of Clermont [252], the Countess of Hainault [253], the Duchess of Bourbon [254], the Countess of Saint Pol [256] and Anne, wife of Ludwig of Bavaria [257] are mentioned shortly before the close of Part Two as 'cytoyennes' of the *Cité des Dames*. In these last ten examples, all taken from post-Greco-Roman European History, we are reminded that Christine wrote for money as well as pleasure: history records that Isabella of Bavaria was a foolish woman, extravagant and profligate in the absence of her increasingly unstable husband Charles VI, and possibly unfaithful to the King. The Isabella Christine portrays 'en laquelle n'a raim de cruauté, extorcion ne quelconques mal vice' [248] is her patron. The realism present in her work prevents her from heaping unrealistic praise upon the Queen. As Curnow notes 'Christine de Pisan does not really praise [Isabella]; she simply says that entry to the *Cité des Dames* will not be refused to the Queen of France' (p. 42).

The *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is a three-part *oeuvre* in its external structure. Part One is dominated by Christine's discourse with Dame Reason, Part Two by her discussion with Dame Rectitude, and Part Three by the Christian women cited by Dame Justice. Of this division into parts, Rigaud comments that:

⁵⁶ Lucien Foulet, *Petite Syntaxe de l'ancien français* (Paris: Champion, 1965), pp. 340-1, cited in Curnow, p. 257.

La répartition en livres ne repose sur aucune distinction logique; elle résulte de la forme allégorique que l'auteur a donnée à son ouvrage. La division en chapîtres correspond davantage à une division de la matière; mais ici encore, elle est parfois artificielle et faite plus pour l'oeil que pour l'esprit. (p. 81)

We shall now examine the internal structure of this text and the division of its subject matter.

The nature of misogynist tradition and the reasons for general antipathy to women are addressed first by Christine and the Virtues and it is in the prologue that we find the first intratextual markers to indicate the balanced nature of the arguments to follow. Reason tells Christine 'regardes se les tres plus grans phillosophes qui ayent esté que tu argues contre ton meismes sexe, en ont point déterminé faulx et au contraire du vray' [4]: the greatest philosophers disagreed amongst themselves and the pronouncements of Aristotle 'tout soit il dit le prince des philosophes'[4] were later undermined by Augustine and other patristic writers. Christine de Pizan attempts to undermine the validity of the canon by suggesting that there may be no central core of agreed opinion. Dame Reason goes further, saying 'il semble que tu cuydes que toutes les parolles des philosophes soyent article de foy et qu'ilz ne puissent errer' [4a]. By introducing the possibility that the practice of antiphrasis amongst the earlier writers has been misconstrued, and by citing Matheolus and Jean de Meung as guilty of this 'misprision', Christine undermines the works of Matheolus and de Meung by suggesting implicitly their lack of intelligence or understanding. Furthermore, we find the first explicit rejection of generalisation in the prologue, when Reason states 'Car saiches que tout mal dit si generaument des femmes empire les diseurs et non pas elles meismes' [4a]. Moving to the field of Letters, Christine opens the discussion proper by asking Dame Reason 'dites moy pourquoy ce est, et dont vient la cause, que tant de divers otteurs ont parlé contre elles en leur livres' [16]. Raison's reply is that 'diverses et differenciees sont les causes qui ont meu et meuvent plusieurs hommes a blasmer les femmes' [16], but that hatred of women is against the law of Nature and of God, who created men and women to love one another. The moderate, tempered nature of

Christine's argument is evident here: in the same way that she refuses to universalise the guilt of one woman to all, so she refuses to impute culpability to all men. Only 'plusieurs hommes' are guilty, and for differing reasons: some use misogynist writing to steer their fellow man away from all women, out of fear that they might fall under the spell of a wicked one, others to draw attention away from their own vices and a few, like Matheolus, whose bodies are no longer capable of physical enjoyment, hope to deprive all men of that which they themselves no longer have. This general discussion of misogynist tradition moves to a more specific level with the invocation of Matheolus's name, followed successively by Ovid, Virgil and Ceco d'Ascoli and the introduction of several named texts. Ovid is first undermined as being a lesser poet than Virgil [25] and is then further relegated to the level of Matheolus for his lascivious life. The invocation of Ceco d'Ascoli's name is intended by Christine as a warning to those who promulgate misogynistic writing: actually burned at the stake for heresy, in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Ascoli's 'criminel vice' was his hatred of women. Christine's message is clear: those who write against women are lesser writers and are in danger of being consumed by fire, either in this life or the next.

From this exchange on the erroneous nature of canonical opinion, Christine adopts a more positive strategy, drawing upon the creation myth for her evidence. In this, the woman writer can be seen to adopt and adapt traditionally misogynist material because, as was mentioned in Chapter One, Woman was generally believed to be an imperfect male: the daughters of Eve who, created while Adam was not fully conscious, could not possibly have equal mental capacities to his. Christine makes full use of her material: women were created from the side of man, to be 'coste luy comme compaignie et nom mie a ses piez comme serve' [27a], 'fourmee a l'image de Dieu'. This woman writer elevates the female body by stating that God made women, not from base matter, but from 'la tres plus noble qui oncques eust esté cree: c'estoit le corps de l'omme de quoy Dieux la fist' [27a]. Additionally, she obviates the need to respond here to the charge of Woman's supposedly inferior intellectual capabilities by having Dame Reason state that 'aucuns sont si folz que ilz cuident, quant ilz oyent parler que Dieu fist homme

a son ymaige, que ce soit dire du corps materiel' [27a], using as her ammunition the virtually uncontested notion that the souls of men and women were of equal perfection; 'Laquelle ame Dieu crea et mist aussi bonne, aussi noble et toute pareille en corps femenin comme ou masculin' [27a]. Ultimately, the Virgin Mary is the most perfect example of that which is female, but this woman writer does not undermine her own case, as the use of Mariolatry might have done: because of the exceptional nature of Mary's virtue, her example was often used significantly as a panacea against the existence of vice in Woman, to counteract the vice of Eve. Christine de Pizan, however, uses the Eve/ Mary dyad to create, as mentioned above, a female space for the women she will mention. Therefore, instead of using the Blessed Virgin as explicitly conferring glory upon the female sex, she transforms Mary into the ultimate helpmeet, without whom men would still be worshipping pagan idols [29].

As in the text itself, we will now examine the specific accusations made against the female sex, voiced by Christine, responded to by the Virtues and reinforced with the use of examples. In some instances where there are several examples cited, one female history is narrated at greater length and in greater detail than the others and may therefore be seen to represent a particular aspect of Christine's defence.

On the charge that women are naturally 'lecharresses et curieuses en leurs mengiers', Reason cites the example of Christine's 'voysine' [31], who makes up for her husband's profligacy by her own sobriety in order to maintain the household budget. That women are naturally prone to tears is admitted as partially true, but 'quant es grans graces fist Dieux a femmes pour cause de leurs larmes' [33] – the tears of Mary Magdalene and Martha moved Jesus to revive Lazarus [33] and those of St Augustine's mother moved him to convert to Christianity [33a].

Against the accusation that women are unfit to hand down legal judgements because of one anonymous woman 'qui en siege de justice se gouverna mausagement' [40], Reason uses the examples of Nicaula [42], Fredegund [43], Blanche (mother of Saint Louis) [44], Jeanne [45], the duchess of Orléans [46], Blanche (late wife of King John) [47], the duchess of Anjou [48] and the countess of La Marche [49] to show that

women can govern wisely. Of these examples, those of Nicaula and Fredegund are the longest, illuminating two possibilities for female conduct. Fredegund is the military mother and regent who, after the death of her husband successfully helps to create peace within the Frankish kingdom. Nicaula, however, is the virgin queen who 'ne voulst que homme se acostast a elle' [42]. All of the other examples in this category are intended to indicate the capacity of French women to govern as widows or regents, but the inclusion of Nicaula creates the possibility that women may have the ability to rule, and not necessarily in the absence of a husband or father.

That women are physically weak and therefore less virtuous is answered by the examples of Semiramis [55], the Amazons [58-63], Zenobia [71], Artemisia [74], Lilia [76], Fredegund [77], Camilla [78], Berenice [79] and Cloelia [80]. These examples are preceded by those of Aristotle and Alexander the Great. Reason states that 'quant Nature se est restraite de donner a quelque corps que elle ait fourmé aussi grant perfeccion comme a un autre [...] elle le recompense d'aucun autre trop plus grant don qu'elle ne luy a tollu': Aristotle's great mind was Nature's consolation for his unattractive physical appearance [51]. Similarly, 'Alyxandre [...] fut tres lait, petit et de chetif corsiage' [51]. Some (even most) women may be physically weak, but they have 'une viguer vertueuse naturelle' [52] and neither are all great men perfect. Christine accepts that most women are more physically frail than men but, through the use of example, refuses to universalise this to all women. Of these gynocentric histories, the grouping together of the Amazons necessarily creates the longest narrative section of this category, but the tales of each Amazon woman are of approximately equal length to one another and to those of Semiramis, Zenobia and Artemisia. Thus, none is given precedent over another and all are justified in the expression of their physical strength: Semiramis as her husband's natural successor; the Amazons out of revenge for the deaths of their husbands; Zenobia as a descendant of the Ptolemies, later as widowed queen and mother, and Artemisia out of grief for her husband, motivated by a desire to preserve his glorious kingdom. The tales of Lilia, Fredegund, Camilla, Berenice and Cloelia are all roughly equal in length, although shorter than those which precede them

in this category. Of these women, Fredegund, Camilla and Berenice actively take up arms and fight; Fredegund for her son, Camilla to avenge her father and Berenice out of revenge for the murder of her sons. Only Lilia and Cloelia do not fight alongside or against men, and their narratives might be seen to represent the possibility that women can take positive, but not necessarily aggressive, action. Lilia, when faced with the potential cowardice of her son, lifts her skirt and tells him 'Vrayement biaux filz, tu n'as ou fouyr se tu ne retournes derechief ou ventre dont tu yssis' [76]. Cloelia prefers to avoid physical conflict with her Roman captors and by deception escapes under cover of night. We shall not examine here the potential for a post-Freudian interpretation of Lilia's actions, (the application of twentieth-century theory will be reserved for the conclusion of this thesis), but we may view the inclusion of Lilia and Cloelia as illustrative of the capacity amongst women to resolve conflict or bring glory upon their nation without resorting to violence.

Against the charge that women do not possess 'l'engin habille' to learn [82], are cited Cornificia [83], Proba [84], Sappho [85], Manto [88], Medea [89] and Circe [90], all proof that women are capable of learning. Of these examples, those of Proba and Sappho are the longest: Christine reinforces her praise of Proba with quotations from Boccaccio, adopting authority from this earlier *auctor*, but Jordan notes that in Boccaccio, Proba is explicitly limited to re-presenting what male poets have written.⁵⁷ Sappho is also validated by reference to earlier *auctoritas*: 'Et de ses dittiez recorde Orace, que quant Platon [...] fu trespasé, on trouva le livre des dittiez de Sapho soubz son chevet' [85a]. Christine chooses to add this authoritative weight to her assertion as a bulwark against the prevailing misogynist notion of Woman's inferior mental capacities. However, although most women have the capacity to learn, 'il n'est pas neccessité a la chose publique qu'elles se meslent de ce qui est commis a faire aux hommes [...] il suffit qu'elles facent le commun office a quoy sont establies' [82]. In this, Christine follows the Platonic notion that men and women are suited for different roles in society. These women are therefore illustrative of the potential amongst women

⁵⁷ Jordan, p. 30.

to learn established arts and sciences as a product of their educative environment. Those figures cited as originators of 'nouvelles ars et sciences neccessaires' [91]: Nicostrata [92], Minerva [94], Ceres [99], Isis [100], Arachne [107], Pamphile [109], are also more centred in environment than in heredity – they have discovered most of the indispensable means of human existence. Thamaris [110], Irene [111], Marcia [112], Anastasia [113] and Sempronia [114] are included to illustrate Christine's assertion that 'femme est habille et prompte a apprendre les sciences [...] aussi est elle tres propre et tres soutive a les executer' [110]. Each of these narratives is of equal length to the others, therefore favouring no specific example over another. Significantly, however, only one narrative is taken from contemporary post-Greco-Roman European History; Anastasia [113] is included by Christine to attest to the continuing possibility of women being trained in the creative arts and validated by being personally known to Reason's interlocutor. Thus, it can be seen that there exist women who have the capacity to create or to learn the philosophical or creative arts and sciences. Some women, however, have 'prudence que on appelle scens naturel' [115a] which is by its nature inferior to science because 'toutes ycelles choses sont faillibles et s'en vont avec le temps; et la science tousjours dure' [115]: Gaia Cirilla [118], Dido [119], Ops [121] and Lavinia [122] all possessed this natural prudence which, although inferior, is nonetheless praiseworthy, as is evidenced by Christine's inclusion of the Epistle of Solomon on the prudent woman [117]. Of these examples, that of Dido is by far the longest and describes in detail her flight from Pygmalion and the construction of Carthage. Christine's suppression of the Virgilian myth is less important in this context than her support of the Justinus Dido's shrewdness, or prudence, in her business or military affairs.

Moving to the Second Part of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, the accusation that women are responsible for the displeasure found in marriage by men 'par la coulpe et impetuosité des femmes et de leur rencuneuse moleste' is answered by Dame Rectitude, who notes the existence of dissolute husbands [153] before proving the existence of loyal and loving wives through the examples of Hypsicratea [155], Triaria [156], Artemisia [157], Argia [158], Agrippina [159], Julia [160], Tertia Aemelia [162],

Xanthippe [164], Pompeia Paulina [165], Sulpitia [166] and 'Plusieurs dames ensemble' [167]. These histories are, again, roughly equal in length to one another and can be seen to represent all capacities necessary to the ideal wife: Hypsicratea, Triaria and Sulpitia cleave to their husbands' side at all times, even during battle and in times of exile; Artemisia, Argia and Agrippina each represent the epitome of the grief-stricken widow, Artemisia by consuming her husband's ashes and constructing the first mausoleum, Argia by braving the carnage of the battlefield to find her husband's body, and Agrippina by starving herself to death in defiance of Tiberius; Tertia Aemilia and Xanthippe are seen as emulating the Classical virtue of stoic apathy, Tertia Aemilia in tolerating her husband's infidelity and Xanthippe in accepting her husband's death; Julia and Pompeia Paulina both die of grief for their husbands and the noble women of Lacedaemonia ('plusieurs dames ensemble') are prepared to sacrifice themselves to save their husbands from death.

Against the charge that 'homme ne die a sa femme chose que il vueille celer et que femmes ne se pueent taire', Rectitude cites the examples of Portia [168a], Curia [169], and 'une femme' [170]. In answering this particular charge, Christine de Pizan chooses to indict Jean de Meung as being one of the major proponents of this accusation. She refers to the earlier *auctor* deferentially, 'maistre Jehan de Meun' [168] but, implicitly, by attempting to prove him wrong, Christine de Pizan might be seen to undermine de Meung's overall authority and thereby depreciate the validity of the *Roman de la Rose*. The refusal to accept universalising generalisation is once again evident in Christine's strategy: as Dame Rectitude states 'tu dois sçavoir que toutes femmes ne sont mie saiges et semblablement ne sont les hommes' [168]. Portia not only remains silent about the secret plot to murder Julius Caesar, but actively seeks to dissuade her husband Brutus from effecting his plan; Curia also takes active steps to ensure the safety of her husband by first hiding him and then affecting grief at his departure, and the woman who endures torture to ensure the safety of those men plotting to kill Nero 'fu esprouvee constant et secrete merueilleusement' [170]. In all

three cases, the necessary secrecy of the women arises out of the ill-considered actions of the men involved.

That a man would be 'vilz et folz qui croyent et adjoustent foy' in his wife, is undermined by Rectitude as she gives the examples of women from the past whose husbands would have done well to heed their advice: Portia [171], the wife of Julius Caesar [171], Julia [171a], Cornelia [171a] and Andromache [171]. This touch of subtle irony is followed swiftly by the mention of several examples whose husbands profited by taking their advice: Antonia [173a] and the wife of King Alexander [173c]. Of these, the history of Antonia is the longer, detailing her efforts to advance her husband. That this should be so is not surprising, given the emphasis on religion found in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*; Antonia is a Christian and her wisdom comes from God.

Against the charge that women should not be educated, Rectitude places the examples of Hortensia [184] and Novella Andrea [185]. In both examples, however, these educated women are defined by the patronymic: each is able to take her father's place, Hortensia in court and Novella lecturing in law. They are therefore, like Proba, only as good as the men they represent. In Novella's case her physical beauty is seen as a distraction for the students to whom she speaks, necessitating a screen to be placed in front of her. This detail might be seen as undermining Christine's argument, but rather it is our contention that she includes this information as an implicit criticism of male preoccupation with the physical over the intellectual. Significantly, Christine also places herself as an example in her own text when Dame Rectitude says 'ne te pot ta mere si empeschier le sentir des sciences que tu, par inclination naturelle, n'en ayes recueilly a tout le moins des petites goutelle[tte]s'[186]. Christine elevates herself to the level of example, thereby attempting to increase her authorial prestige.

To the accusation that there exist few chaste women, Rectitude replies with the examples of Susanna [187], Sarah [188], Rebecca [189], Ruth [190] and Penelope [191]. It is interesting to note that in her reply to this single most common assertion made about women, Christine draws her examples predominantly from the single

source of authority which could not be questioned by her audience without being accused of heresy, the Bible. However, although these women fall into the category of Christian Tradition, they are not Christians and nor is Penelope, taken from Classical Mythology. Christine, as we shall see, reserves Christian chastity for Part Three of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, but the inclusion of these examples can be seen to reinforce the idea that it is possible for women to be naturally chaste, even without the power of faith. Expanding the question of chastity to the charge that it is virtually impossible to find a beautiful and chaste woman, Rectitude retorts with the examples of Mariannes [192], Antonia [193], Mark Anthony's daughter [193] and Sulpitia [194a], although the latter two are little more than incidental references. Again, none of these women is a Christian: Mariannes' virtue is lauded because of her great beauty, which makes her the object of many men's desires but who 'par grant vertu et force de couraige resista a tous; et pourtant fu plus louee et plus resplandissant en renommee' [192]; Antonia remains a chaste widow 'resplandissant des tres souveraine biauté' [193]. In both of these narratives it is possible to detect Christine the social moralist at work: of Mariannes's chastity, Christine comments 'Et encores qui plus croist son grant los est qu'elle estoit tres mal mariee' [192], and with reference to Antonia 'Si fist de ceste chose plus a louer, ce dit Bocace, qu'en telle continence estoit demourant a court entre les jouvenciaulx bien parez et asesmez' [193]. This woman writer here exposes the double standards existing in societies which demand the appearance of chaste and virtuous behaviour from a wife or widow, whilst at the same time expecting her to succumb to temptation.

Moving from the possibility of seduction to the question of rape, Christine notes the assertion that 'hommes dient tant que femmes se veullent efforcier'. That women should actively court rape as a means of expunging themselves of guilt is countered by Rectitude, who recounts the stories of Lucretia [195], the Queen of the Galatians [196], Hyppo [197], the Sicambrians [197a], Virginia [198] and the Lombard ladies [199]. Of these, the tale of Lucretia's rape is the longest. This is unsurprising, given that it is possibly the most widely-known story of rape to pass down from ancient times. It is

significant, and in keeping with Christine's condemnation of social hypocrisy, that Lucretia is less afraid of dying by Tarquin's sword than the loss of reputation that would arise out of his false allegation of adultery. Where Lucretia kills herself out of remorse, the Queen of Galations decapitates her rapist and presents his head to her husband. In this she is the exception, as Hyppo, the Sicambrian women and Virginia all prefer to take heroic action and commit suicide. The example of the Lombard ladies is more problematic because, although they avoid the trauma of being raped, the action of putting raw chicken flesh upon their breasts so that the smell of rotting meat would dissuade their attackers could hardly be described as heroic. It does, however, open up the possibility, like the earlier examples of Lilia [76] and Cloelia [80], of positive, although not necessarily heroic or aggressive, female action and might also be seen as a perfect example of the medieval proverb that '*engin mieux vaut que force*'.

Against the charge that women are morally or emotionally weak, Rectitude relates the tales of Griselda [209], Florence [213], the wife of Bernabo the Genovan [215] and Leaena [216]. Griselda can be seen to represent the epitome of stoic apathy, propounded by the Church and its moralists. Tested four times by her husband to prove her patience, love and endurance, she is depicted as selfless, modest and as a dutiful wife. As such, she is rewarded. Florence and Bernabo's wife take active steps not only to avoid death after false accusation but also to clear their names. Both become in some way indispensable to men: Florence by her expertise in the healing arts and Bernabo's wife through her transvestism as servant to the Sultan of Babylon. In this, both women can be seen to capitalise upon what we might term the 'transferable skills' of matrimony: Florence, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, can be seen to continue to minister to men, and Bernabo's wife continues to serve her master diligently. It is not coincidental that the male protagonists should appreciate these services when they believe that they are not provided by their wives; Christine the social commentator can be seen in this way to ask her male readership to reconsider their expectations of marriage. Leaena too, although referred to more than narrated, takes strong moral action in biting off her tongue rather than betray her associates, but that

she should feel the need to do so 'adfin qu[e le juge] n'eust esperance que par force de tourmens luy faist dire' implies that she would not be strong enough to endure torture. Although Griselda is highly praised by this woman writer, and her example is the longest narrated, we should remember that the ideal of stoic apathy was intended as a remedy against Woman's ungovernable emotions. Christine is therefore remaining within the established parameters of prescriptions for female behaviour: by depicting these 'strong' women, she aligns herself in part with the canonical idea of the strong, but uncontrollable, emotions of Woman. By showing that these women are capable of restrained strength, however, she portrays the act of self-control as a positive, rather than static, ideal.

Dido [220], Medea [221], Thisbe [222], Hero [223], Ghismonda [224] and Lisabetta [226] are the examples used to refute the accusation that 'Woman' is inconstant in love, 'quoy qu'il soit des femmes legieres'. The examples of Dido and Medea have been adequately discussed above and need not be repeated here. Interestingly, while all of the other women cited may indeed have been constant in love, the nature of their amorous relationships is dubious, as they have been formed either without, or expressly against, familial wishes and each ends tragically. The tales of Ghismonda and Lisabetta are the longest, most detailed and, significantly, both are noted as having been taken from Boccaccio. Ghismonda is doubly culpable; firstly by failing to show appropriate filial respect and secondly by debasing herself in taking 'un escuyer' as a lover. Lisabetta too disobeys her male relations and takes a lover from amongst the servants. Evidently, Christine is attempting to reinforce her message that illicit love is dangerous in three ways: she explicitly cites Boccaccio in both examples to add *auctoritas* to her narrative; in choosing examples from Post-Greco-Roman European History, she depicts women closer chronologically to her readers as therefore more immediate and accessible; by having all her examples under this heading end tragically, Christine the moralist is at work, attempting to warn her female readership of the dangers of illicit love and filial disrespect.

On the charge that women are coquettish and prone to self-decoration, the examples of women whose virtue attracted men more than their beauty are drawn: Lucretia [240] and Queen Blanche, mother of Saint Louis [241] are all intended to illustrate the capacity for virtue in women of all eras, as are the personal acquaintances mentioned by Christine when she states 'je congnois de femmes vertueuses et saiges' sought after by men at court. It becomes apparent, however, that being obviously virtuous can prove to be a no-win situation; Lucretia, in this narrative, sows the seeds of her own destruction through her virtuous behaviour. A group of noblemen engaged in debate over the relative virtues of their wives, ride to each of their homes and establish their spouses' leisure pursuits. Lucretia 'fu trouuee la plus honnestement occupee' but, unfortunately for her 'La fu venu [...] Tarquin, filz du roy, avec le mary d'elle, qui regarda sa tres grant honnesteté [...] fu tant enamourez d'elle que il se mist a faire la follie qui il fist puis' [240]. Christine now realises 'que le grant bien d'elles estoit cause de les faire amer' [242].

Against the accusation that 'entre les vices femenins avarice leur soit chose si naturelle' [243], Rectitude gives the examples of the Ladies of Rome [244], Busa [245], and Marguerite de la Rivière [246], all of whom gave from their personal wealth, and in the case of Marguerite de la Rivière from her personal attire, to help men.

Part Three of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is peopled exclusively with exemplary religious women. We would contend that these examples are not intended to be representative of women, but that they are included as ideals of behaviour to which women should attempt to aspire. As Kevin Brownlee notes 'the taxonomic hierarchy of female exemplarity that Christine establishes in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* privileges absolutely the figure of the female Christian martyr'.⁵⁸ As a pedagogue, Christine reveals herself to be the successor of Cicero, of whom Smith comments 'The underlying premise of the example [...] led Cicero to recommend examples also for the purpose of exhortation to either the pursuit of virtue or the avoidance of vice'.⁵⁹ As

⁵⁸ Kevin Brownlee, 'Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Diité de Jehanne d'Arc*, in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover & London: University of New England Press, 1989), pp.131-50 (p. 132).

⁵⁹ Smith, p. 7.

Rectitude states 'Et pour contredire par exemples aux diz [...] te diray d'aucunes femmes [...] desquelles les histoyres sont belles a ouir et de bon exemple' [208].

Christine therefore notes each charge against women and responds to them. In this, the internal structure of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* mirrors Jehan le Fèvre's *Livre de Leësce*, noted above as le Fèvre's personal apology for his translation of Matheolus.⁶⁰ However, while their method may be similar, the nature of their authorial responsibility is vastly different. In the prologue to the *Livre de Leësce*, le Fèvre begs his female audience's forgiveness for any offence he may have caused them with his translation of Matheolus, but absolves himself from guilt by laying the blame for the offensive material squarely at the feet of the earlier author he merely translated. Smith states that, by commenting in the prologue that 'il n'est riens qui n'ait son contraire' he can be seen to undermine the validity of his text before it is begun.⁶¹ Further, by postulating that he is merely the scribe for Lady Leësce, he 'takes no more responsibility for the case for women than he did for the case against them' (p.55).

Christine's use of Dames Reason, Rectitude and Justice as a vehicle for argument is made to serve a very different end: where le Fèvre's use of the female mouthpiece, Leësce, might be seen to undermine his case, Christine achieves two very important ends through her allegorical use of the three Virtues. Firstly, by establishing the Virtues as daughters of God, she invests their words with greater authority. Secondly, Christine is therefore able to place herself in her own narrative as a real woman, using personal experience as another level of authority and adding veracity to the weight of her case. That there exists a temperate woman has been personally witnessed by this woman writer [31]. That there is merit in the education of women is attested to by Dame Reason, taking her very interlocutor as her example [186]. Christine also attempts to invest her earlier works with authority through another use of self-reference in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. On four occasions, the Virtues mention previous works by her as being representative of their arguments:

⁶⁰ See Curnow, pp.127-32 for a comprehensive discussion of Christine's divergences from le Fèvre.

⁶¹ See Smith, pp. 53-9.

1) Reason tells Christine that 'ycestes choses je te ramentois [...] touy meismes les ayes recitees autresfoiz en ton *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune* et meesement en ton *Epistre de Othea* [60]; 2) Later in Part One, when speaking of the contributions to society made by women, Reason notes that Christine has made mention of 'signiffiances de [...] grant savoir[...] en ton *Livre de Othea* [100]; 3) In Part Two, Rectitude tells Christine 'ainsi a tous propos veullent avoir les hommes la droit pour eulx [...] de ce as tu assez sou[ffi]ssament parlé en ton *Epistre du dieu d'amours*. [200]; 4) Later again, Rectitude states 'toy meismes as assez souffisantment traittié la matiere, tant contre Ovide comme contre autres, en ton *Epistre du dieu d'amours* et tes *Epistres sur le Rommant de la Rose* [219a].

Overall, of the effect created by the examples utilised in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Rigaud comments:

Si *La Cité des Dames* est une oeuvre plus hardie dans son ensemble, c'est qu'il s'agissait d'édifier une ville idéale en dehors du temps et lieu. Les héroïnes qui la composent sont, pour la plupart, non seulement libérées de la tutelle maritale, mais placées par leur éducation, leur naissance ou d'autres circonstances extraordinaires, hors des conditions habituelles de vie. (p. 138)

This statement may, to a certain extent, be true, but we have contended that in attempting to address the notion of Woman established as authoritative over the centuries, it is appropriate that Christine should use examples drawn from authorities over the centuries. None of the examples cited by this woman writer is intended as representative of all women; to have done so would have been to defeat her refusal of universalising generalisation. The female mythography created by Christine de Pizan is, in its inception, designed not only to undermine the validity of canonical orthodoxy but also to illustrate the potential capacities which may be found in women. What, then, can Christine de Pizan be seen to suggest about these capacities in women?

In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, women are shown to be capable of sobriety, prudence, strength (both physical and moral), learning, invention, loyalty, secrecy, wisdom, education, chastity, virtue, generosity and enduring love. Above all, women

are seen to be capable of heroic action, whether in defending their chastity or in assuming the masculine role.

Christine de Pizan has therefore refuted the idea of Woman as imperfect Man by setting up the notion of Woman in polar opposition to Man, fully cognisant that the idea of Woman is the negative pole. Thereafter, through sustained rejection of universalising generalisation, expressed by the successive citation of attested example, Christine reveals the prevailing notion of Woman to be flawed. By extension, if the notion of Woman is flawed, then the code of conduct propounded for that Woman must necessarily be flawed. In the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, Christine attempts to revise this erroneous code of conduct. Solente states that:

le féminisme de Christine de Pizan ne dépassera pas les limites imposées par les usages et les idées qui avaient cours de son temps. Elle ne demandera pas l'égalité des sexes. Elle veut que les femmes remplissent les devoirs de leur état et de leur situation et les leur énuméra dans ce traité moral et social écrit à leur intention, qu'elle intitule le *Livre des Trois Vertus*. (pp.38-9)

That Christine de Pizan in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* continues to reject an all-encompassing notion of Woman is evidenced by the fact that she specifically addresses herself to women of all ranks of society, from queens to prostitutes, advocating different modes of behaviour for each, whilst at the same time retaining a central emphasis upon Christian morality for all. Rigaud comments that:

bien que la *Cité des Dames* et le *Livre des Trois Vertus* se suivent dans l'ordre de leur composition, et qu'il y ait même entre ces deux oeuvres des liens logiques, rien de plus différent, au premier abord, que l'esprit dans lequel elles ont été conçues [...] On y incline d'autant plus que le *Livre des Trois Vertus* est le meilleur des ouvrages de Christine de Pizan; que c'est une oeuvre soignée, écrite de sang-froid, où elle s'est montrée ce qu'elle est réellement et foncièrement: éducatrice. (pp. 115-6)

An examination of each of the women addressed by Christine de Pizan would again be a lengthy process and one which is not part of our purpose. In the same way that Christine sets up an alternative, not oppositional, view of women in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, she prescribes an alternative set of rules

governing female behaviour. Similarly, just as the examples cited in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* are taken from established authorities, this woman writer works within the established rules of behaviour to provide a more realistic provision for active female participation in society. Marie-Thérèse Lorcin suggests that Christine's classification of women in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* is based upon three combined factors: age group, civil status, husband's profession for married women, and economic dependency for unmarried women.⁶² This would reinforce our contention that Christine's codes of conduct for women are practical and grounded in real society. As Yenal notes, in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* 'Christine does not attempt to justify or rehabilitate women; instead, she outlines their roles and responsibilities in society' (p. xx). It was Yenal too who advocated the idea that the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* 'is the only writing in which [Christine] specifically asks for the right to an education for women', noted above (p. 12). It is our contention that this statement is misleading; as we have noted, Christine established that women were capable of learning and fit to be educated. However, although Dame Rectitude agrees that Christine was disadvantaged by her mother's disapproval of education for girls [186], there is no explicit plea in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* for a programme of education for women. Reason states that 'se coustume estoit de mettre les petites filles a l'escolle et que suyvantment on les fist apprendre les sciences, comme on fait au filz, qu'elles apprendroyent aussi parfaitement [...] comme ilz font'[82]. Evidently, educating girls is not customary, nor does Reason suggest explicitly that it should be so, she merely suggests the capacity for knowledge in women. Later, Christine declares 'je me merueille trop fort de l'oppinion d'aucuns hommes qui dient que ilz ne vouldroyent point que leurs filles ou parentes apprentissent sciences et que leurs meurs en empirent' [183]. Rectitude replies, not with a plea for conventional education, but for women to be instructed in 'les sciences moralles'. Astrik L. Gabriel concurs that 'The aim of feminine education in the view of Christine de Pisan is the acquisition of *moral wisdom*'.⁶³ Christine may be seen to complain for

⁶² Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, 'Christine de Pisan analyste de la société', in *The City of Scholars*, 191-205 (p. 197).

⁶³ Astrik L. Gabriel, 'Educational Ideas of Christine de Pisan', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XVI

herself that she was not educated in the arts and sciences, but she by no means pleads for all women to be given this instruction. As an extension of this, in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, Christine specifically propounds different educational provision for boys and girls (I, XV). The wise princess should wish for her children that 'ilz soient bien endoctrinéz, que ilz apprennent tout premierement a servir Dieu [...] qu'ilz soient introduis ou latin'. Given the phallogentric nature of the French language, it is not possible to state categorically whether these remarks refer to children of both genders, or only boys. Given Christine's emphasis on morality, it is probable that the idea of religious education implies children of both sexes. However, when we consider the comments to follow, specifically relating to the education of girls, it does not seem likely that Christine is really advocating the instruction of Latin to the little princesses for any purpose other than that they should be able to follow the Mass in their psalter. She states 'quant sa fille sera en aage qu'elle aprengne a lire, après ce qu'elle saura ses heures et son service, que on lui admenistre livres de devocion ou qui parlent de bonnes meurs'. In this, Christine can be seen to adopt convention by retaining the appropriate prescription for female education. However, by having proclaimed the capacity for knowledge which might be found in some, or even most, women, this woman writer adapts the canonical orthodoxy of the simple-minded Woman.

The canonical codes of conduct propounded for Woman have been adequately consulted in Chapter One. We shall not therefore reproduce them here but we shall give an overview of the ways in which Christine's prescriptions converge with, and diverge from, canonical orthodoxy for female behaviour. All references are to Charity Cannon Willard's edition of the *Livre des Trois Vertus*,⁶⁴ all names are spelled as therein.

In keeping with ecclesiastical and moral doctrine, Christine emphasises the superiority of the contemplative life over the active one by citing the examples of Mary Magdalene and Martha (I, VI). This notwithstanding, although the contemplative life is 'plus parfaicte', Christine recognises that the demands of society preclude the vast

(1955), 3-22, (p. 120).

⁶⁴ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* ed. and trans. by Charity Cannon Willard (Paris: Champion, 1989).

majority of women from the spiritual solace of contemplative life and notes that the active life is of particular value to society: 'Yceste vie active sert [...] plus au monde'. By setting up a binary opposition between the two ways of life, Christine creates the space for the real women in society to exist: 'Je voy bien que puisque je ne me sens de tel force que puisse du tout en tout eslire et suivre l'une des deux susdictes voyes, je mettray peine a tout le moins de tenir le moyen' (I, VII).

To all women, Christine addresses the comment 'Entendez doncques [...] comment tout premierement sur toutes choses vous aduit amer et craindre Nostre Seigneur' (I, II). For this woman writer, the fear of ultimate damnation should govern female behaviour more than the dictates of society. It is through divine inspiration that women will resist temptation (I, IV), whoever they are, whatever their station in life. Between the two poles of love and fear of God can women find the means to live appropriately.

To summarise other salient points briefly: a good princess will be virtuous, chaste, charitable, prudent and wise. She will manage her household effectively by participating actively in all things and personally overseeing all aspects of the estate, including animal husbandry (II, X). She will dress soberly and behave with decorum. She will see her husband 'le plus sovent que elle pourra, et du veoir sera tres joyeuse', even if he is 'pervers, rude, mal amoureux vers sa femme' (I, XIII). She will pray for his redemption and in his absence, or in the event of his death, she will have the 'auctorité de faire et gouverner semblablement' (I, XXI).

The very young widow must be supervised (I, XXIV), as must the very young bride (I, XXV), to avoid being drawn into sin by the men of the court. In this, the lady-in-waiting is advised by Christine (I, XXVI) and is even given a model letter (I, XXVII) that she may send to her mistress, if she fears for her young charge's salvation. Ladies-in-waiting at court are advised to be chaste, honest and refrain from jealousy, guarding against immodesty and envy (II, II-VII). Indeed, all women in the upper ranks of society should cultivate these habits, along with humility, and should dress themselves soberly, the better to achieve the outward expression of virtue.

Women of the middle classes should not attempt to emulate higher class women, but should dress appropriately for their station. Indeed all women, right down to the wives of agricultural labourers (III, XII), should dress with modesty and in a manner appropriate to their rank.

Like the Church Fathers, Christine therefore disapproves of overt personal decoration, but she makes no allusion to Tertullian's condemnation of the decorated woman as the devil's gateway. On the whole, it may be said that Christine's Christian values of modesty, chastity and sobriety fall broadly into line with ecclesiastical doctrine, but Christine advocates these values, not as a remedy against an ungovernable body, but as human virtues which enable women to be better human beings in their allocated roles within an active society.

Also in keeping with canonical orthodoxy Christine lauds the ideal state of virginity as enabling a woman to embrace the contemplative life and devote herself to God. The young woman who is to be married for parental prestige however, is treated somewhat differently. Her virginity, like that of Synoppe [57], Camilla [78], Cloelia [80], Minerva [94], Cassandra [140], Virginia [198], Claudine [237] and the blessed virgins of Book III in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, might be seen both as a weapon and a virtue. In this, Christine deviates from the patristic writers for, not only is virginity the path to spiritual union with God, it is also a means of retaining one's independence, free from the subservience due to one's husband. Virginity is the ultimate form of chastity, and chastity is a virtue every woman should cultivate, even married women. The only exceptions to this are women belonging to the religious orders, whose husband is, by implication, God. These women, 'de qui qu'elles soyent nees, pour reverence de Dieu a qui se sont donnees et mariees peuent bien aler au renc' (II, XIII). Entry into the religious orders is therefore the path to salvation, but one which precludes active participation in society.

Of all the virtues that Christine propounds for women, that of Prudence is the most commonly cited. This is an extension of Christine's writings on prudence in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, where the prudent woman was one possessed of natural

sense. In the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, however, women should be instructed by prudence in all things. Prudence 'tout premierement enseignera a la princepsse ou haulte dame comment sur toutes les choses de ce bas monde doit aimer honneur et bonne renomée' (I, XI).

If Christine emphasises the potential for active female participation in society, it would be well to mention briefly how women relate to men within that society. We have seen that Christine acknowledges the existence of evil women and is unafraid to cite Athalis, Jezebel and Brunhilde [208] in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Between Eve and Mary lies the space for women. Between Judas and Christ lies the space for men. Christine, by showing that men have erred in their pronouncements about women, implicitly acknowledges the existence of human frailty in both sexes. The women in Christine's society fulfil their major role in serving their husband well, either in life or by perpetuating his good reputation after his death. Christine acknowledges the existence of dissolute husbands and unhappily married women, but her advice is for forbearance and prayer (I, XIII).

To conclude, we would contend overall that Christine de Pizan adopts and adapts all manner of authorities and examples, appropriating them for use in her project to create a more realistic view of women. She achieves this by various means and on various levels. By adapting the creation myth in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, this woman writer deliberately sets up a universalised notion of Woman as something other to man. As we examined in Chapter One, Woman was most often considered an imperfect male and that this uni-polar theory of human existence was virtually unassailable. Christine de Pizan places Woman at the opposite pole to man, fully cognisant that Woman must inherently be seen as a negative being. Thereafter, within that negative pole and by formulating the Eve/ Mary dyad, she creates the space for women to exist with all their strengths and weaknesses. This she achieves through her refusal to universalise the sin of Eve to all women and by defining Mary as an exceptional ideal who conferred glory upon the female sex, but not as representative of all women. This deliberate creation of sex-polarity is therefore subsequently tempered

into what Prudence Allen termed 'sex complementarity'⁶⁵. By this, we mean that Christine de Pizan advocates different roles, but not different capacities for the sexes. In this, she can be seen to reflect Plato and Clement of Alexandria. As Allen states 'Sex complementarity considers the opposition of male and female as a positive dynamic of equals in interaction, rather than as a relation of superior to inferior'.⁶⁶ We would contend that through constant use of the patronymic in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine de Pizan implies the existence of qualities previously considered as exclusively masculine in women, but that code of conduct she propounds for women in the *Livre de Trois Vertus* requires women to assume the masculine role only in the absence of a male relative. That women have the potential to possess these qualities is evident through the examples of Semiramis, the Amazons and others examined above in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, but under the terms of sex-complementarity, women are required only to assume the masculine role if they must and are only justified in killing if they do so out of revenge for the slaying of a husband or son, or for the greater common good. In real society as represented in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, women are not required to take heroic action; only exemplary figures, worthy of inspiring in other women a desire to aspire to or to emulate such behaviour, are depicted as heroic. As Thérèse Ballet-Lynn notes of Christine's heroic women 'Que ses héroïnes soient des souveraines ou de modestes pucelles, elles s'élèvent au-dessus de la moyenne par leurs actions, leur intelligence, leur courage, leur volonté'.⁶⁷ Such is the case with Joan of Arc. In the *Conti de Jehanne d'Arc*, Christine de Pizan states :

Mais quant à nous, oncques parler
N'oÿemes de si grant merveille
Car tous le preux au long aler
Qui ont esté, ne s'appareille
Leur prouesse à cest qui veille
A boutez hors noz ennemis
Mais ce fait Dieu, qui la conseille,
En qui cuer plus que d'omme a mis.
(XXVI)

⁶⁵ Prudence Allen R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC – AD 1250* (Montreal and London: Eden Press, 1985).

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 79.

⁶⁷ Thérèse Ballet-Lynn 'L'héroïsme féminin chez Christine de Pizan', *Trivium*, 26 (1991), 81-8 (p.87).

Joan is exceptional, as the handmaid of God, but even she takes her place in the order of things as of secondary importance to the King.⁶⁸ Joan of Arc is a contemporary Mary: virginal, imbued with the holy spirit and divinely inspired to assist the divinely appointed Charles. Brownlee contends that 'According to Christine's concept of history and feminism, [Joan of Arc] represents the ultimate standard, the sole authority' (p.137). He goes on to suggest that Joan's superiority over any other heroic *exemplar* used by Christine is self-evident; Joan is a female warrior and a Christian virgin whose present deeds are already written down in the history of the future in stanzas 41-5. We would contend, however, that this superiority 'desur tous les preux passez' (XLIV) precludes Joan from being seen as representative of the female sex because her power comes directly from God- 'elle est de Dieu en grace' (XXXII). She may inspire women to aspire to her chaste yet active participation in society, and she may reflect glory upon her sex, 'Hee! quel honneur au femenin sexe!' (XXXIV). By the very fact of her existence she is evidence of the potential capacity for virtue which may be found in women, but she cannot be seen as illustrative of the entire sex.

Women in real society, however, may be required during their lifetime to assume an active masculine role and our final point of reference for evidence of Christine de Pizan's sex-complementarity is the *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*.⁶⁹ Written in 1403, Christine describes her 'mutacion' after the death of her husband thus:

[1325]	Adont vers moy vint ma maistresse,
	Qui a plusieurs la joye estrece,
	Si me toucha par tout le corps;
1328	Chacun membre, bien m'en recors,
	Manya et tint a ses mains
	Puis s'en ala et je remains,
	Et, comme nostre nef alast
1332	Aux vagues de la mer, frapast
	Contre une roche moult grant cas;
	Je m'esveillay et fu le cas
	Tel qu'incontinent et sanz doubte
1336	Transmuee me senti toue
	Mes membres senti trop plus fors
	Qu'ainçois et cil grant desconfors

⁶⁸ See the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* for Kennedy and Varty's discussion of the 'descending, hierarchical pattern (God-Charles VII-Joan- the French troops- the English and their allies)', p. 10.

⁶⁹ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, ed. by Suzanne Solente, 4 vols (Paris: Picard, 1959-66).

- 1340 Et le plour, ou adés estoie
 Auques remis; si me tastoie
 Moy meismes com toute esbahie.
 Ne m'ot pas Fortune enhaïe
 1344 Adont, qui si me tresmua,
 Car tout soubdainement mua
 Celle grant paour et la doubte,
 Ou je me confondi toute.
 Si me senti trop plus legiere
 1348 Que ne souloye et que ma chiere
 Estoit muee et enforcie
 Et ma voix forment engrossie
 Et corps plus dur et plus isnel,
 1352 Mais choit de mon duy fu l'anel
 Qu'Ymeneüs donné m'avoit,
 Dont me pesa, et bien devoit,
 Car je l'amoie chierement.
 1356 Si me levay legierement,
 Plus ne me tins en la parece
 De plour, qui croissoit ma destrece.
 Fort et hardi cuer me trouvay,
 1360 Dont m'esbahi, mais j'esprouvay
 Que vray homme fus devenu;
 (I, pp. 51-3)

This personal exposition of sex-complementarity is evidence of the existence in real women of the capacity for active virtue, the capacity of women to learn and thrive as wives or as widows. Christine de Pizan is therefore *auctor* and *exemplum* simultaneously, using the authority of her experience and the *auctoritas* of her authorial persona to establish the existence in real women of the capacity to assume the masculine role by using herself as example. This 'transformation' should not, however, be taken literally as a metamorphosis. As Rigaud states 'cette transformation [...] est, à la vérité, plus un enrichissement qu'une métamorphose et, pensant à ses expériences personnelles, elle la conseille, dans son *Livre des Trois Vertus*, à celles que l'infortune a privée de leur protecteur naturel' (p.31). That this transformation should be considered figurative rather than literal, is evidenced more explicitly in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* when Christine says of the widowed woman 'se a chief en veult venir, que elle prengne cuer d'omme, c'est assavoir constant, fort et sage pour avisier et pour poursuivre ce qui luy est bon à faire' (III, IV).

Christine's practical life-plan for women, extrapolated in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, can therefore be seen to divide into three stages, as her works almost

universally divide into three parts: a chaste and virtuous childhood with appropriate provision for education; marriage, participating actively in society as a virtuous wife, suffering any matrimonial abuse with stoic apathy; retreat into the contemplative life, the better to devote the end of one's days to God. Where she diverges from the canon, it is to place emphasis upon the individual qualities of women and upon the possibility for women to serve the common good as active participants in society.

CHAPTER THREE

Example and Authority in *L'Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre

Je n'espargneray homme ne femme, afin de faire tout esgal
(*L'Heptaméron* IV; 35)

L'Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre is an unfinished collection of 72 *nouvelles* narrated by ten *devisants* while marooned at the Abbey of Notre Dame de Serrance after a flood of almost biblical proportions. Their intention is to partake of a 'passe-temps qui ne soit dommageable à l'ame [et] soit plaisant au corps'.¹ The text first appeared in 1558, nine years after Marguerite de Navarre's death, as a collection of stories entitled *Histoires des Amans fortunez*, edited by Pierre Boaistuau. This collection comprised only sixty-seven stories in an order never again used, contained none of the linking passages between the tales and made no reference to authorship. Nicole Cazauran comments that 'Si la première édition de 1558 était anonyme, l'épître dédicatoire de Pierre Boaistuau laissait aisément reconnaître Marguerite de Navarre dans l'auteur féminin dont on vantait la foi et les mœurs', noting too that Marguerite's authorship was attested to by both Montaigne and Brantôme.² Only one year later, in 1559, Pierre Gruget produced an edition of the same work which claimed to have restored the tales to their correct order. This edition, *l'Heptaméron des Nouvelles*, also explicitly cited Marguerite de Navarre as the author. P.A. Chilton, in his introduction to the 1984 Penguin translation of the *Heptaméron*, notes that, while Gruget had ordered the tales into 'Days', each comprising ten narratives, he had removed three complete tales which criticised the religious orders, and replaced them with three less inflammatory stories.³ This, Chilton contends, instead of 'establishing the *Heptaméron* canon, end[ed] up raising questions about it' (p. 8), noting the existence of a manuscript dated to 1553, edited by Adrien de Thou, titled *Le Décaméron*, which

¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by Michel François (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1991), p. 8.

² Nicole Cazauran, *L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris: SEDES, 1976), p. 19.

³ Marguerite de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Paul A. Chilton (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 7-33.

contained empty pages 'for missing tales to complete the hundred implied in the title' (p. 8). Where Sylvie Lefèvre states that 'Marguerite a repris toute seule le projet de la Cour de constituer un recueil de nouvelles à l'instar du *Décameron* de Boccacce',⁴ Chilton contends that 'There is [...] no definitive or generally agreed text' (p. 9) and postulates that the tales may have been contributed by Marguerite's courtiers. Chilton's view is not easily supported, given the number of extant manuscripts which follow the same pattern as the Gruget edition, and it is universally acknowledged that the Queen of Navarre was the general editor of the collection and that she provided the narrative framework within which the stories are placed.

Beside the more illustrious literary figures of the sixteenth century such as Montaigne and Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre has, until relatively recently, been consigned to the level of a secondary or inferior writer. Renewed interest in her work arose in the mid to late nineteenth century with Le Roux de Lincy's 1858 edition of *L'Heptaméron*, followed by a further edition from Frank in 1873 whilst, this century, editions have appeared in 1942 from Michel François, noted by Chilton as 'the most widely used version' (p. 9), and in 1967 from Yves Le Hir. The Queen of Navarre became the focus for much scholarly activity heralded in 1930 by Jourda's seminal two-volumed work on Marguerite,⁵ followed relatively swiftly by works from Emile Telle and Lucien Febvre.⁶ H.P. Clive notes that the upsurge of academic interest in Marguerite de Navarre began in the early 1960s and that since then, there has been a 'remarkable increase in scholarly activity' on this woman writer.⁷ General works written on *L'Heptaméron* include those by Henri Vernay, Jules Gelernt, Marcel Tetel and Nicole Cazauran.⁸ In 1977 Marie-Madeleine de la Garanderie produced a study

⁴ Sylvie Lefèvre, '*L'Heptaméron*': *codices & indices* in, *Autour du Roman: Etudes Présentées à Nicole Cazauran* (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, 1990), 71-94, (p. 71).

⁵ Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, duchesse d'Alençon, reine de Navarre: Etude Biographique et Littéraire* (Paris: Champion, 1930).

⁶ Emile Telle, *L'Oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre, et la Querelle des Femmes* (Toulouse: Lion, 1937); Lucien Febvre, *Amour Sacré, Amour Profane: Autour de 'L'Heptaméron'* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944).

⁷ H.P. Clive, *Marguerite de Navarre: An Annotated Bibliography* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1983), p. 7.

⁸ Henri Vernay, '*Raison*' *Autour de Marguerite de Navarre* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1962); Jules Gelernt, *World of Many Loves: The Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Marcel Tetel, *Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron: Themes, Language*

which examined the personalities and motivations of the *devisants*, along with the subject matter of the tales they narrate and the tenor of these tales.⁹ La Garanderie tabulated her findings at the close of each character analysis but these tables, whilst something of an innovation at the time, serve little purpose other than to summarise the personality of the *devisant* through illustrating the nature of the tales narrated. Betty Davis, too, provides character analyses and investigates the potential identities of the *devisants*, a subject pursued by others such as Joseph Palmero and A. Krailsheimer, although on Palmero's paradigm of using the apparent ages of the *devisants* to establish contemporary identities, Cazauran comments 'C'est plus ingénieux que convaincant' (p. 29).¹⁰

Within the past decade, work on Marguerite de Navarre has flourished quite dramatically, with a wealth of articles published world-wide each year. For the most part, articles have concentrated upon one aspect of the work or upon one *nouvelle* as illustrative of one such aspect, but are too many in number to be cited here (see our bibliography). Larger works have been produced more recently by Patricia Cholakian and Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani.¹¹ The burgeoning fields of gender studies and new historicism open ample material for study in *L'Heptaméron* and articles have been produced regularly, either as journal publications, as proceedings of a colloquium, or as collected essays.¹²

Marguerite d'Angoulême was born on April 11th, 1492 to Charles d'Orléans, Count of Angoulême, and Louise de Savoie. A distant cousin of the ruling Valois

and Structure (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1973); Nicole Cazauran, *L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre*.

⁹Marie-Madeleine de la Garanderie, *Le dialogue des romanciers - une nouvelle lecture de L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris: Lettres Modernes-Minard, 1977)

¹⁰Joseph Palmero, *L'Historicité des devisants de L'Heptaméron*, *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 69, (1969), 193-202; A.J. Krailsheimer, *The Heptaméron Reconsidered*, in *The French Renaissance and its Heritage: Essays presented to A. Boase* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 75-92

¹¹Patricia Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La Conversation Conteeuse - Les Nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1992)

¹²*Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); *Prose et Prosateurs de la Renaissance: Mélanges Offerts à Robert Aulotte* (Paris: SEDES, 1988); *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. by Régine Reynolds-Cornell (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1995); John D. Lyons *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, c1989), 72-117.

family, her father Charles was next in line to the throne after his cousin Louis, until the reigning Charles VIII produced an heir in 1492. Unfortunately, the young dauphin died aged three in 1495 and Charles d'Angoulême died a year later, leaving his widow Louise embroiled in a political struggle: Marguerite's brother François having inherited his father's title in 1496, the family became hostage to the political ambition of Louis d'Orléans as he sued Louise for guardianship of the young heir to the throne. Louise de Savoie retained guardianship of her children, but the power-struggle with Louis continued, particularly after the death of Charles VIII and Louis' accession as Louis XII. After being forced out of court by the Queen and kept virtually under house arrest, Louise's political ambition for her son relied upon Louis XII dying without a male heir. In 1509, Louise secured the marriage of her daughter to Charles, Duke of Alençon. The marriage between the seventeen year-old Marguerite and her elderly husband was not a happy one, but was arranged out of political expediency and out of financial necessity, as Marguerite had almost no dowry. On January 1st 1515, however, Louis XII died without issue, and the new François Ier summoned his sister from her marital home in the provinces to assist him at court. Invaluable to her brother, Marguerite represented François as an ambassador, marshalled troops, supervised construction work and advised the youthful King. In 1524, defending Provence against the Imperial army of Charles V, François led his troops into Italy and was promptly captured. Marguerite's husband had fled the battle and died shortly afterward. Louise was declared regent, but it was Marguerite who journeyed to Spain in 1525 to negotiate François' release. Initially unsuccessful, Marguerite's diplomatic skills established the foundations for the 1526 Treaty of Madrid, which secured the release of the King and made her something of a national heroine. In 1527, Marguerite was married again, this time to Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre. She gave birth to a daughter, Jeanne, one year later. By all accounts, the union was a love match for Marguerite, but her husband's infidelities were to cause her grief and his political machinations would eventually bring about her fall from political grace. Henri d'Albret had lands still in the possession of Charles V; as his brother-in-law François

Ier was unwilling to help, Henri attempted to negotiate the recovery of his land by allying himself to the Emperor. He was unsuccessful in his political machinations and succeeded only in alienating the King, who was thereafter suspicious of Henri's motives and loyalty. During this time, Marguerite became interested in the Reformist movement of the Church and, in 1533, invited Gérard Roussel to preach in the Louvre during Lent. This created a public outcry from the ultra-orthodox Sorbonne, which also accused her *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* of heresy and, after the *affaire des placards* in 1534, Marguerite retired south to her estates. In 1541, aged 13 and unwilling, Jeanne d'Albret was married to the Duke of Clèves at the King's insistence. The marriage was later dissolved because of the Imperial war and in 1547, after the death of François Ier, Henri II ordered Jeanne to marry Antoine de Bourbon. Marguerite disapproved of the match, unlike the King and the bride, and retired to her husband's southern estates, where she died on December 21st 1549, out of favour with the monarch and estranged from her daughter. Her involvement in the Reformation and her awareness of power relationships colour the *Heptaméron* as much as her education and what Jules Gelernt terms the 'cultivated sociability' she learned at her mother's court.¹³ Gelernt posits Jourda's suggestion that Marguerite de Navarre's poetical career was launched out of her interest in the Reformation, under the influence of Briçonnet who encouraged her to meditate upon spiritual matters. This meditation, according to Gelernt, made the Queen of Navarre increasingly aware of the 'gap separating human practice from Christian ideals' (p. 17), an awareness she brought to the *Heptaméron*. He comments:

Although her interlocuters, modeled on her intimates, voice differing and conflicting points of view, they share her ideal of an enlightened humanism and a liberal evangelism; their clashes thus enrich the synthesis of the ideal and the real Marguerite had always sought. It is in this, her one truly popular work, that the Queen of Navarre gives us the most complete statement of her moral and intellectual vision. (pp. 32-3)

We shall reserve our main examination of this woman writer's views on organised religion for discussion later in this chapter and in the Conclusion we shall compare

¹³ Gelernt, *World of Many Loves*, pp.1-17.

and contrast her critical methodology with that of Christine de Pizan. Like Christine de Pizan, Marguerite de Navarre's earliest writings were in verse, and were mainly devotional or political in subject matter. Paula Sommers has examined the possibility of Marguerite having read Christine's works, noting the existence in the royal library of a significant number of Christine's manuscripts.¹⁴ She comments, however, that '[d]ocumenting whether Marguerite read any of the works in this collection, or from other sources, is somewhat difficult, given the fact that she never specifically mentions Christine' (p. 74). Sommers' study states that Marguerite 'shares with her fifteenth-century precursor a sincere interest in the rights of woman and a willingness to speak out in their defense' (p. 76). Whilst we would certainly concur with this assertion, to presuppose the influence of Christine's work on the *Heptaméron* when there exists no explicit evidence would be dangerously anachronistic. For the purposes of this chapter, we shall discuss Marguerite's only prose work without reference to Christine and examine the ways in which Gelernt's 'enlightened humanism' and 'moral vision' can be detected in her portrayal of women.

This chapter will address the portrayal of the Woman within *L'Heptaméron*, as she is presented both in the *nouvelles* and in the personae of the *devisants*. We will examine whether the work as a whole might be said to be 'feminist' or 'antifeminist', not only in terms of the structures and literary techniques appropriated from the canon, but also by considering whether there is a preponderance of tales either favourable or unfavourable to the Woman as indicative of a pro or anti-Woman authorial bias. This will necessarily lead to an examination of the prevailing attitudes of the *devisants* themselves, the preoccupations and prejudices which manifest themselves as the group debates its own *querelle des femmes*, thus presenting a microcosm of the larger dispute expounded in the literature of the sixteenth century. In the course of their debates, the *devisants* will inevitably discuss the conduct of the women portrayed in the *nouvelles*. We shall undertake to examine whether the

¹⁴ Paula Sommers, 'Marguerite de Navarre as Reader of Christine de Pizan' in, *Visitors to the City: The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries*, ed. by Glenda K. McLeod (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 71-82.

preconceived image of Woman held by the *devisants* can be seen to reflect the notion of Woman prevailing in Renaissance society, as discussed in Chapter One. It will therefore be necessary to examine whether a coherent image of the Woman can be seen to exist in *L'Heptaméron*. Such an examination must undertake to explore any code of conduct propounded for the Woman, to discuss whether any of the *nouvelles* can be said to portray the 'ideal' female persona and to investigate whether any discrepancy exists between the Womanly ideal delineated in courtesy literature and the practical reality of Woman's existence in society as depicted in the tales narrated. We shall show that, through her use of example and authority in the *L'Heptaméron*, Marguerite de Navarre does not seek the equality of the sexes, but can be seen to expose the ideal mode of female conduct as unattainable in real society. It is our contention that, through the constant rejection of universalising generalisation about the Woman, as expressed through the medium of the *devisants*, Marguerite de Navarre attempts to create a more realistic view of women.

The literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rarely, if ever, presented a balanced view of the Woman. The majority of writers, whether 'feminist' or 'antifeminist', sought to prove the pre-eminence of one sex over the other, utilising a combination of authority, example and ratiocination.¹⁵ As we noted in Chapter One, and examined in Chapter Two, example was by far the most popular method of argument, as it provided an attestable model of behaviour and constituted an elementary method of teaching, accessible to all and unequivocal in message. As such, it was prevalent in both 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' writings. Authority in the form of quotation from the Scriptures and from Holy Writ in general was popular amongst 'antifeminist' writers whereas a large number of 'feminist' texts were written in dialogue form. Of these, a substantial number presented one interlocutor as a virulent misogynist who was not uncommonly converted to the female cause by the close of the text. Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which we will discuss shortly as a possible model for Marguerite's text, made use of multiple interlocutors whose tales and

¹⁵ As discussed by Ian MacLean in, *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in French Literature 1610-1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) pp. 35-40.

debates reflect contemporary *mores*. Another influential text constructed in similar fashion is Castiglione's *The Book of The Courtier*, printed in 1527-8. Castiglione's text has been described by J.R. Woodhouse as 'a splendid vehicle for transmitting such fashionable topics as Neoplatonism, the encomium of wit and wisdom, the celebration of martial prowess and chivalrous accomplishments, the debate on feminism and so forth.'¹⁶ Although primarily considered a manual for the ambitious courtier, the subjects debated by the interlocutors are reflective of Renaissance society's preoccupations, including the on-going *querelle des femmes* and can be seen to reflect the tension between appearance and reality which the reader finds in *L'Heptaméron*.¹⁷

As has already been established, the prevailing 'antifeminist' image of the Woman was an amalgam of assertions and generalisations appropriated from theologians and the philosophers of Antiquity, reiterated with such regularity that it acquired a *de facto* authority. We shall see that Marguerite de Navarre appropriates different forms of authority and *auctoritas* from both 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' texts to establish her authorial credibility and that, by her use of example, she rejects a universalised notion of Woman in favour of a more realistic prescription for female behaviour.

The *devisants* who find themselves at the Abbey of Notre Dame de Serrance do so after a series of incredible, not to say miraculous and, at times, implausible events although, of the Prologue, Cazauban comments 'les histoires de brigands ou de bêtes sauvages n'étaient pas si rares qu'elles ne puissent passer pour un reflet de la réalité et [...] ce voyage après les pluies diluviennes d'automne se fait assez précis pour créer l'illusion' (p. 28). The resultant group of ten nobles is divided equally between the sexes, of whom three form a nucleic power-base: introduced first, second and third respectively are Oisille, Hircan and Parlamente. As the group endeavours to find an activity to fill the time until the flood waters have subsided, it is Oisille who suggests that their time be spent in devotion and prayer where, in stark contrast,

¹⁶ J.R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A Reassessment of 'The Courtier'*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), p. 2.

¹⁷ *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983).

Hircan suggests 'les passetemps ou deux seulement peuvent avoir part' (I, Prologue, p. 9). Parlamente as Hircan's wife postulates that the group find a happy medium between devotion and amusement by advocating the art of story-telling.

The group is thus under the direction of these three *devisants* and their activities decided: their mornings will be spent in studying the Scriptures, their afternoons in story-telling. Parlamente and Hircan have the distinction of being the only married couple explicitly mentioned amongst the *devisants*. All the story-tellers are, at some point, shown to have spouses, with the exception of Oisille and Longarine (both widowed) and Dagoucin, whom Betty Davis contends is unmarried.¹⁸ An ambiguous remark at the end of the Fourth Day¹⁹ makes the existence of other married couples within the group a distinct possibility and, indeed, Davis hypothesises that Saffredent may be married to Nomerfide (p. 46). There is, however, little to be gained by the inclusion of character analyses for each of the *devisants* here: Davis and others have provided ample material for further reading²⁰ and, for the purposes of this thesis, the characters' verbal contributions are more significant to the establishment within the text of a reasoned image of the Woman.

The existence of stereotypical images of Woman will be examined later in this chapter through the subject matter of the *nouvelles*. Firstly, however, we will begin by examining whether any of the topoi of 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' writings can be detected in *L'Heptaméron*. We shall see from this that Marguerite de Navarre adopts authority from 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' rhetoric, from canonical orthodoxy and from personal circumstance, adapting these levels of authority in her pursuit of a more socially real image of women.

¹⁸ Betty J. Davis, *The Storytellers in Marguerite de Navarre's 'Heptaméron'*, French Forum Monographs, 9 (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1978), p. 34. Davis writes that 'Dagoucin has no personal experience of marriage'. In this, she is inferring from [IV, 40] that, because all the other men in the company acknowledge either being, or having been, married, Dagoucin must therefore be a bachelor.

¹⁹ "ceux qui étaient mariés ne dormirent pas si longtemps que les autres, racontant leurs amitiés passés et démontrant la présente" (p. 335).

²⁰ See also: Regine Reynolds, *Les devisants de 'L'Heptaméron'. Dix personnes en quête d'audience* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977).

Authority exists in *L'Heptaméron* in a variety of structural forms and vented through the mouths of a variety of characters. We shall first examine the intertextual authority appropriated by the Queen of Navarre, as a prelude to closer, intratextual and linguistic examination. Cazauran suggests as Marguerite's sources for the *Heptaméron* the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the *Décameron*, *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, Erasmus' *Colloques*, Pierre de Lesnauderie's *Louenge de Mariage*, *Le Livre du Mesnagier de Paris*, and the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais. Immediately apparent here is that Marguerite de Navarre has little in common with Christine de Pizan's source materials (noted in Chapter Two), with the exception of the *Speculum Historiale*. Also apparent is the presence of Boccaccio amongst Marguerite's sources and it has often been suggested that the *Heptaméron* owes some kind of 'debt' to the *Decameron*. We shall reserve a comparison of both these women writers' relations to the works of Boccaccio for our Conclusion and thus, for the present, we shall restrict ourselves to an examination only of Marguerite's *oeuvre* in relation to Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

John D. Bernard notes the general academic consensus that the *Heptaméron* owes its inception to the *Decameron*, but very little else.²¹ The first French translation of the *Decameron* appeared in 1414, the work of Laurent Premierfait. However, in the Prologue of Marguerite's text, we find a reference to a new translation of Boccaccio 'nouvellement traduites d'ytalien en françois' (I, Prologue, p. 9). This version was commissioned from Antoine Le Maçon by Marguerite herself, appearing in 1545, part of a period in French history when, according to Chilton 'the kings sought to annex Italian territory by means of ambitious military expeditions and to assimilate Italian literary and artistic culture as well' (p. 11). Marguerite de Navarre may therefore be seen not only to assimilate Italian literary culture by commissioning a new translation, but also to appropriate the authority of Boccaccio by adopting his narrative structure. We have noted the consensus that the *Heptaméron* mirrors the *Decameron* only in its general conception, an opinion that finds fuller expression in Cazauran, who states:

²¹ John D. Bernard, 'Realism and Closure in the *Heptaméron*: Marguerite de Navarre and Boccaccio', *The Modern Language Review* 84 (1989), 305-18, (p. 305).

dans le parti qu'elle tire de ce cadre, dans la manière dont elle met en scène ses narrateurs, elle ne doit rien à ce modèle tant vanté. Elle tire de son propre fonds ces débats qui dessinent le mouvement du recueil, donnent leur pleine substance aux récits et suffisent à faire exister les personnages des devisants. Boccace a sa manière d'encadrer et d'introduire les nouvelles; elle a la sienne, toute différente [...] les deux ensembles diffèrent par leur mouvement, par la manière dont ils ménagent les pauses et les enchaînements. (p. 70)

We would contend that, while the internal movement of the *Heptaméron* can be seen to differ from that of the *Decameron*, this difference should be seen less as a rejection of Boccaccio, but as an adaptation of the external structure adopted from the Italian *oeuvre*. Thus, Marguerite adopts authority from Boccaccio and adapts it in her own narrative. Bernard suggests that:

in borrowing Boccaccio's framing device and substituting a flood for the plague and an abbey for a succession of private villas, Marguerite does not render events more realistically than her predecessor does. Instead, she alters the symbolism, evoking a more Evangelical metaphysical scheme in lieu of Boccaccio's late-medieval one. (p. 308)

Whilst it is undeniable that the *Heptaméron* of Marguerite de Navarre is a profoundly spiritual work, we would suggest that on a social level, the success of this text as a didactic work for both men and women relies precisely upon its realism. We suggest that social realism is fundamental to the purpose of this woman writer: if, as is our contention, she hoped in any way to create a more realistic image of women in society, the society she portrayed would have to be accessible and realistic, in order to throw into sharper relief the erroneous nature of canonical universalising generalisation of the notion of Woman. John D. Lyons states that:

The tension between [an] aspiration to an expression of doctrinal purity and the semblance of a recognizable image of social life is [...] an ambiguity that appears most forcefully when two levels of discourse meet and clash at the border between the internal tales or novellas themselves and the discussions or commentary on the tales given by the frame-characters [...] [t]he conflict between an intemporal or transtemporal representation of conduct (the paradigmatic axis) and the actualized or temporally anchored representation of conduct (the syntagmatic axis) is [...] characteristic of those collections following the Boccaccian model

in which the frame-narrative sets forth judgements of value on the conduct of the novella characters and in which the 'examples' of conduct appear as an explicit form of rivalry or correction of previous examples.²²

As we shall discuss later, the dialogue sequences which follow each *nouvelle* provide a socially real vehicle for Marguerite's comment on canonical orthodoxy by contrasting the narrated example with the contemporary opinion of the *devisants*. In the *nouvelles* and in the dialogues which follow, the reader finds various strata of authority.

The first explicit intratextual use of authority in *L'Heptaméron* is delineated in the Prologue, when Parlamente stipulates that the tales they tell will be true ones: 'quelque histoire qu'il aura veue ou bien oy dire à quelque homme digne de foy', as Mme Marguerite and the Dauphin had done [I, Prologue], (p.10). Relating a true story is a form of quotation, hence the veracity of the tales is intended to represent another, alternative form of authority, founded in the truth of experience, an eye-witness account.

The reflexivity of Marguerite's self-representation in the Prologue might be seen to add a more political level of authority to the text. Deborah N. Losse comments that:

If we attribute the social stature of the extrafictional voice to the public narrator of the *Heptaméron*, a female member of France's royal family, there is a corresponding effect on two elements of narrative status. The reader is more likely to believe the narrator's claim for historical authenticity [...] is apt to credit her with a heightened diegetic authority [...] as well as an enhanced mimetic authority.²³

Not only does Marguerite's status as sister of the King create a level of political authority in the narrative, but her role as respected literary patron should not be neglected: the Queen of Navarre was patron and mentor to such illustrious literary

²² John D. Lyons, 'The *Heptaméron* and Unlearning from Example', in *Exemplum*, pp.72-117 (p. 74).

²³ Deborah N. Losse, 'Authorial and Narrative Voice in the *Heptaméron*', *Renaissance & Reformation* 23 (1987), 223-42, p. 225.

figures as Marot and Rabelais. Sommers states that Marguerite 'impressed contemporaries with her learning and mystical fervor'.²⁴ François Ier was himself a literary patron, and protector of Marot and Rabelais. Indeed, it is probable that Marguerite employed Marot as her secretary on François' recommendation.²⁵ Rabelais dedicated his *Tiers Livre* to the Queen of Navarre and in his oration described her as 'esprit abstraict, ravy, et ecstatique'.²⁶ Sommers notes that Marguerite's erudition was widely acclaimed, stating that

Charles de Sainte Marthe, paying tribute in language that reflects both admiration and the prejudices of his time, wrote that she possessed "un heroique et virile coeur" and devoted herself "aux arts dignes de l'occupation de l'homme et aux honnestes et louables exercises" (p. 71)

It is not unreasonable, therefore to conjecture that Marguerite's personal, political and literary status combined to make her less in need of literary *auctoritas* appropriated from earlier *auctores* than Christine de Pizan, a subject we will discuss later.

Many of the tales in *L'Heptaméron* are, in fact, historically accurate events gleaned from the experiences of Marguerite de Navarre and her circle, intertwined with the narrative to create an authority founded in personal experience. Cazauran comments that:

Dans cette oeuvre de fiction, tout se donne pour vrai, la réunion des devisants à l'écart du monde et de leurs habitudes, comme les récits qu'ils apportent à tour de rôle, et sans cesse se mêle, comme les récits déjà fort anciennes, le plus précis recours à l'expérience vécue. (p. 39)

She contends that François Ier appears as King in *nouvelles* [II, 16] and [VII, 63], as a 'jeune prince' in [III, 25] and [V, 42] and that Marguerite herself appears explicitly in [I, 1; III, 22; VII, 68; VIII, 72], usually as judge or witness. In this, Cazauran therefore

²⁴ Sommers, *Marguerite de Navarre as Reader of Christine de Pizan*, p. 71.

²⁵ R.J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of François Ier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Knecht suggests that François Ier was keenly aware of the power of literary opinion, and that he used these authors to promote his qualities and exploits, pp.464-70.

²⁶ François Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, ed. by M.A. Screech (Geneva: Droz, 1964), p. 1.

omits four tales: [I, 6], where Marguerite deliberately places herself in the narrative as Charles d'Alençon's wife; [VII, 62] in which, Cholakian contends, the 'dame du sang roial [...] qui sçavoit bien dire ung compte' is 'transparently Marguerite de Navarre herself' (p.210); [VII, 66], in which she is alluded to as mother of the bride; and [I, 4], the attempted rape of the Flemish princess, whom Cholakian also suggests is Marguerite de Navarre. This, Cholakian states (p. 9), was attested to by Brantôme in his *Dames Galantes* (c1584), who had received the information from his grandmother, Marguerite's lady-in waiting. It is not our purpose to engage in an historiographical enquiry into the veracity of these statements, but it would be well to examine briefly the nature of Marguerite's self-representation, something we will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four.

Having mentioned briefly above the nature of Marguerite's self inscription in [I, 6] (discussed in more detail below) and [VII, 66], we will look now at those other tales which remain. In [I, 1], Marguerite pleads with her brother to extend clemency to a former servant, securing his release; in [III, 22] she comes to the rescue of Sister Marie Heroët, in peril from an evil Prior; in [VII, 68] she sends her personal apothecary to cure the man 'poisoned' by the love potion his wife has administered; and in [VIII, 72] she comes to the aid of a young nun seduced by a monk. Given the nature of Marguerite de Navarre's position in society, it is entirely conceivable that she should have been involved in such situations. However, it is more significant that her participation in these tales throws into relief the Christian virtue of humility, the often unhappy state of married life which reduced women to desperate measures and, above all, her criticism of the abuses rife within the religious orders. The possibility of her identity in [VII, 62] is unsubstantiated, but can be seen from an appropriate socio-historic perspective as an extension of the *mise en abyme* of the Prologue where Marguerite, represented by Parlamente, refers to herself as Marguerite, talking about writing a *Decameron*. We shall consider [I, 4] later in our discussion of the significance of the rape in the *Heptaméron*. It is not unreasonable to conclude that, by introducing herself into the narrative, Marguerite establishes an intratextual level of

authority, not only based upon the truth of personal experience, but also one which is validated by the intertextual authority of her political power in society, as the sister of the King.

Cholakian notes that some of the tales, specifically [I, 6, 7 & 8] have their roots in earlier works such as the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and as such could be considered neither historically accurate nor truthful. She comments that:

The Prologue's promise to include no tale that the narrators could not personally guarantee to be true would lead one to suppose that the "different" text, which the *Heptaméron* purports to be, would exclude such tales. This is not the case [...] All three conform on the surface to the antifeminist conventions of the [novella], and 6 and 8 are undoubtedly based on tales found in previous collections. (p. 65)

It is our contention that the inclusion of these tales performs the same function in the *Heptaméron* as the inclusion of female figures from earlier sources in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* of Christine de Pizan: by appropriating material from an earlier *auctor*, Marguerite de Navarre likewise appropriates *auctoritas*. As we shall come to examine, this woman writer, like Christine de Pizan, not only adopts earlier sources but adapts them in different ways to serve her philosophical end. As Cazauran notes:

En comparant les récits de L'*Heptaméron* à la tradition narrative du Moyen Age et du XVI^e siècle, en France et en Italie, on voit en effet apparaître, à côté des sources 'historiques' qui relient très précisément l'oeuvre à son temps et à la vie de son auteur, des sources 'littéraires' qui nous rappellent que Marguerite de Navarre ne refuse pas de recourir à la fable, tout en s'appliquant à lui donner, par des précisions de dates et de lieux, l'apparence de la vérité. (p. 33)

Cholakian suggests that [I, 6] corresponds to Novella 16 of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and, as such, 'is none other than the old chestnut about the one-eyed cuckold' (p. 66) whose wife covers his good eye so that her lover might escape. In subject matter [I, 6] does not deviate significantly from the earlier version, but the manipulation of earlier source material by the addition of 'authentic' historical detail creates a 'realism' conducive to social comment. By describing the husband as 'ung

viel varlet de chambre de Charles, dernier duc d'Alençon', Marguerite places herself within the narrative but, as Cholakian points out 'What appears at first glance to be added to confirm the story's historicity also calls attention to a reality— that marriages between servants were often unhappy because of their masters' insensitivity to their rights' (p. 67). Tale [I, 6] is designed more as a critique of social and sexual mores than as a 'true' story: young women were often forced to accept a substantially older husband, particularly if they came from a poor family and had therefore little hope of making an advantageous match. In [I, 6], the desolation felt by the wife after her husband's desertion 'qui, par le moyen de ses amys, excuses et larmes, retourna encores avecq luy' can be seen to criticise a society where women were rendered financially dependent upon a man they did not love. Through the insertion of accurate social detail, Marguerite 'authenticates' the *nouvelle* and, in so doing, she creates a realistic representation of marital misfortune.

Tale [I, 7] centres upon what Cholakian describes as 'another conventional novella figure – the trickster who saves himself by his wits' (p. 69). In this narrative, the male protagonist is 'ung marchand' who has seduced his young neighbour in an effort to conceal his more 'noble' love for another woman. After being forbidden to see her lover again, his young mistress, 'qui plus aymoît ce marchand qu'elle ne craignoit sa mere, le chercheoit plus que paravant'. In the course of one assignation, the impending arrival of the young woman's mother is announced, whereupon the merchant feigns an attempt to force himself upon the mother, in order that his mistress might escape to a neighbouring house, 'dont le marchand et elle ont maintefois ri ensemble depuis aux despens de la femme vieille qui jamais ne s'en apparceut'. As Cholakian states 'The doubtful humour in [this] story is based on the assumption that sex with an old lady is funny' (p. 70). However, the nature of Marguerite's social comment is more serious, as she highlights the double standards of male sexuality: it would appear that for the male narrator of this tale, Hircan, it is acceptable for a nobleman to use a woman of the lower classes for gratuitous sex, whilst at the same time being engaged as an honourable *serviteur* to a noble lady. Marguerite de Navarre

has therefore appropriated a stock character from the *fabliau* tradition to illustrate the imbalanced nature of male/ female sexual relations in a society where men demand chastity of its women and wives, but expect to meet no resistance in their amorous adventures. The ideal noblewoman might be held up on a pedestal for chaste admiration, but the real women of society's lower ranks were expected to serve men's needs, both servile and sexual.

In [I, 8] a good wife attempts to keep her husband faithful by taking her maid's place in bed, only to become the unwitting sexual victim of her husband's friend. It might be said that in taking the maid's place, the wife has attempted to usurp the power position of her husband and is thus punished by her unknowing infidelity. When recounted by the female mouthpiece of a woman writer, however, some distinct differences can be found. The first of these is the ironic humour of the wife's surprise upon having intercourse with the man she assumes is her husband 'dont la femme s'esmerveilla fort car elle n'avoit point accoustumé d'avoir telles nuitées'. Cholakian points out that in this tale, *L'Heptaméron* follows the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* closely, but that in *L'Heptaméron*, the husband's sexual potency is implicitly undermined and the wife is not portrayed as a sex-starved vixen; what pleasure she takes in the act she does in anticipating the remonstrative speech she will make to her husband the following day. Also, where in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the chambermaid is sent away and the husband's cuckoldry never revealed, in *L'Heptaméron* the wife's reputation remains untarnished and the husband is forced to assume responsibility for his wife's infidelity (pp. 72-3). In short, it can be said that Marguerite de Navarre has created a far more gynocentric account of a well-known tale. By manipulating these tales, either by the insertion of historical fact, or by the suppression of material from the earlier source, Marguerite de Navarre has effectively adopted authority from established texts and has adapted them to expose the double standards at work against an unrealistic notion of Woman in a male-dominated society. As Cholakian comments 'Marguerite de Navarre incorporated such

conspicuously twice-told tales into her collection *because* they cast doubt on the old fictions about women' (p. 67).

Another form of intertextual authority used intratextually in the *Heptaméron* is the practice of quotation by the *devisants* of earlier writings. These quotations are taken from the Bible, the philosophers of antiquity and from contemporary canonical works. In short, these quotations are drawn from the very sources which had created, and perpetuated the prevailing notion of Woman up until the Renaissance, sources which were constantly used as proof in the *querelle des femmes* by both 'feminist' and 'antifeminist' writers. Authority in the form of Ecclesiastical quotation is practised in *L'Heptaméron* by Oisille for a purpose neither 'feminist' nor 'antifeminist': to her, the Bible represents the ultimate source of all truth and, in a time of considerable religious ferment, she advocates frequent study of the holy book as a bulwark against the misinterpretations of those who, like Saffredent, would seek to pervert the Scriptures to their own ends [V, 44] (p. 304). Oisille makes almost constant reference to the Bible, or to Holy Writ, either for a homiletic purpose or to reinforce an assertion made by one of the *devisants* in the dialogues which follow each of the *nouvelles*. In [VI, 54], she uses 'Nous vous avons lamenté et vous n'avez point pleuré; nous vous avons chanté et vous n'avez dancé (p. 343) from Luke VII, 32 to depict the conduct of the ideal wife who weeps when her husband is ill and rejoices when he is happy. In [VI, 55], she cites 'sainct Pol [qui] dist que nous sommes le temple de Dieu où il veult habiter' as an exhortation to virtue during one's lifetime (p. 347).

Saffredent is the literary manifestation of the archetypal 'antifeminist'. Eloquent and erudite, he quotes Latin, the Scriptures, Platonic philosophy and the *Roman de la Rose*. His citations from Scriptural authority often serve as a tool for his irony: in [I, 8] he describes honourable *serviteurs* as 'dignes d'estre mis au rang des Innocents, desquels l'Eglise chante: *Non loquendo, sed moriendo confessi sunt*' (p. 49). They are also almost always distorted to fit his own ends; he vaunts God's exhortation to love one's neighbour as justification for adultery, declares the murder of one's unfaithful spouse devoid of all sin and postulates that God himself absolves infidelity

[IV, 35] (pp. 264-265), invoking the words of St. John: 'Comment aymerez-vous Dieu que vous ne voyez point, si vous n'aymez celluy que vous voyez?' (p. 265). To this, Oisille pointedly replies: 'Il n'y a si beau passaige en l'Escripture...que vous ne tirez à vostre propos [...] il est dangereulx d'alleguer l'Escripture sans propos ne nécessité' (p. 265). In this way, Marguerite de Navarre can be seen to undermine the validity of preconceived judgement based upon canonical orthodoxy and, on a more subtle level, to criticise those members of the religious orders who would abuse their spiritual status for personal gain.

Citation of the Scriptures is not the sole source of intertextual authority cited intratextually in *L'Heptaméron*; quotation from works of literature, both old and new, and from the philosophers of Antiquity is a popular sport amongst the story-tellers. Authority in the form of quotation from literature is practised by Saffredent, invariably as a means of reinforcing one of his usually scurrilous assertions about woman. He cites a well-known proverb in [I, 10] as evidence that women are as eager for sexual gratification as men and that, by accepting the role of *serviteur* with good grace, a man may be confident of eventually securing his own satisfaction, when he quotes 'De bien servir et loyal estre, De serviteur l'on devient maistre' (p. 84). This is an echo of his earlier quotation from *Le Roman de la Rose* in [I, 9], stressing the inevitability of carnal relations 'Nous sommes faictz, beaulx filz, sans doubtes, Toutes pour tous, et tous pour toutes' (p. 54). This is intended to validate his proclamation that love affairs which went unconsummated had less to do with the virtue of the lady than with his own lack of perseverance. Saffredent at this point attempts to find authority where there is none: in quoting the old woman in the *Roman de la Rose*, he claims to be voicing an opinion more authoritative than those professed by men of letters, a somewhat specious argument, given that the words attributed to *la vieille* were written by a man, a fact he conveniently chooses to ignore. His second and final citation of the work in [III, 29], argues his assertion that, whilst love may be a noble emotion restricted to the aristocracy, the need for sexual release is common to all 'Aussi bien sont amourettes Soubz bureau que soubz brunettes' (p. 228). Saffredent's

attempt to assume authority by quoting de Meung is undermined variously and subtly by Marguerite: not only does he mar his own argument on p. 54 as we have noted, but Longarine states in [III, 24] that de Meung advocates 'mensonge, ypocrisie et fiction' (p. 203), *mensonge* having been qualified as 'ung vice laid et infame' (p. 202). Authority in the form of quotation from earlier literature therefore exists in *L'Heptaméron* as an 'antifeminist' technique when used by the male *devisants*, a point accentuated by the very multiplicity of its reference points, but one whose validity is uncertain.

References to the Neo-platonic concept of love are common in the text although Plato himself is mentioned only three times. Jules Gelernt states that 'the significance of the Neoplatonic movement lay in its attempt to restore unity to a badly splintered universe, to bridge the gap which divided a secularized society from the divine essence' (p. 58). In this, the office of *serviteur* bears a certain resemblance to the role played by the chivalric courtly lover, in that glorification and adoration of the Woman are paramount. The lover should serve his lady and strive at all times to preserve her honour. Thus the Neo-platonic lover struggles incessantly with his inevitable desire to consummate their relationship, a struggle through which he may hope to realise the superiority of spiritual love and thus enable himself to move closer to God. The Neo-platonic lovers recognise above all perfection in one another, in order to better appreciate the perfection of God. This concept is first expounded by Dagoucin [I, 8] and is immediately exposed to the derision of Hircan and Simontault:

Par ma foy [...] je ne croys pas que jamais vous ayez esté amoureux; car, si vous aviez senty le feu comme les autres, vous ne nous paindriez icy la chose publique de Platon, qui s'escript et ne s'experimente point. (p. 48)

Parlemente is the *devisante* who extrapolates the merits of the Neo-platonic lover in a speech which reiterates many of the sentiments expressed by Dagoucin and goes further still in [II, 19], to emphasise the religious aspect of Neo-platonic love, through which the chaste lover moves closer to God 'car foy seullement peult

monstrer et faire recevoir le bien que l'homme charnel et animal ne peult entendre' (p. 152). Tetel postulates that Parlamente '...presents perfect love as a theory which she proposes [...] as an ideal to try and live by [...] to bring moments of nobility to human relationships.²⁷ Jourda proposes tales [II, 19; III, 21, 24; VI, 57] and, more importantly, the discussions by which they are preceded and followed, as the exposition of Marguerite's Neo-platonic sympathies. Specifically, he concludes that the song in (I, 19) might be considered the 'manifesto' of Neo-platonic perfection, composed as it is by a 'perfect' lover who has sublimated the chaste love he had for his lady into love of God.²⁸ Thus, reference to Platonic or Neo-platonic ideals can be seen as a means of invoking authority through quotation from philosophy. Nevertheless, this technique exists less as a 'feminist' or 'antifeminist' technique in *L'Heptaméron* than to serve as an illustration of a moral and behavioural paradigm of the ideal commutation of a woman's love of a man into her love of God. In addition, it must be admitted that while Parlamente is sincere in her Neo-platonic beliefs, Dagoucin's proclamations of belief in the superiority of spiritual love over the carnal are little more on his part than an attempt to curry favour with the ladies of the company. Gelernt, however, disputes Jourda's assertion of the existence of Neo-platonic values in the *Heptaméron*, values he prefers to describe as:

Christian love, where a frustrated relationship causes one or both parties to retreat from the world and turn to God instead. There are three such stories [19, 24, 64], and in each case God does not so much become an object of purposeful love as a refuge and source of consolation – the lovers' retirement to the monastery is really a step preliminary to death. (p. 64)

It is not our purpose to engage in a protracted examination of the intricacies of Neo-platonic philosophy. What is significant in these tales is that Marguerite de Navarre depicts the renunciation of potentially sinful love and implicitly encourages the sinful to find spiritual salvation. Whether we consider her philosophy to be entirely Neo-

²⁷Tetel, pp. 17-18

²⁸For a more detailed analysis, see Jourda, pp. 901-903.

platonic or not, her authority is drawn from the possibility of salvation through worship.

Another literary technique found in *L'Heptaméron* is the use of dialogue. Although traditionally a staple of the 'feminist' tract, dialogue in *L'Heptaméron* is a group activity between multiple interlocutors rather than a rhetorical exercise between two. It is a fundamental element of the dynamic social interchange necessary for the narrative structure to function. Moreover, conspicuous by its very absence is the proselytisation of any of the 'antifeminist' *devisants*. This will be discussed later with reference to specific *nouvelles* as evidence of Marguerite's social realism and of her attempt to create a more realistic view of women, by exposing the intransigent nature of misogynist orthodoxy. In fact, Marguerite de Navarre has appropriated an established rhetorical device in the use of dialogue between the characters, one which permits her to incorporate another respected method of argument into her *oeuvre*, that of example.

Turning next to example in the text, it can be seen to be a technique which, like the use of authority, has been adopted and adapted in *L'Heptaméron*. Traditionally, example illustrated only one side of the coin – collections or 'galleries' of *exempla* presented woman as either unremittingly wicked or as the incarnation of perfection and virtue. Texts falling into the former category intended to impress upon the reader that vice was inherent to all women: of these, Troussel's later *Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice des femmes* (1631) is probably the best known. Works in the latter category intended to confer glory upon the whole of the female sex, out of which grew the vogue for Marian literature and the figure of the *femme forte*. This exclusivity is absent in *L'Heptaméron*, as will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter. What is of more interest is how, in the absence of universally acknowledged, well-known examples from history, *L'Heptaméron* can be said to be using example. Put simply, example can be seen to exist in the insistence upon the truth of the tales stipulated in the Prologue, redefining the accepted model and replacing it with one no less valid because it is truthful. Indeed, as has already been

mentioned, there is documentary evidence to suggest that several of the tales in *L'Heptaméron* are drawn from actual events in the life of Marguerite de Navarre and her circle.²⁹

Authority established by the intertextual inclusion of earlier works of literature can furnish intratextual example, another method employed by Marguerite de Navarre, and one confined almost exclusively to her alter-ego, Parlamente (with the exception of Longarine's reference to de Meung, mentioned above). We have elected to categorise Parlamente's remarks primarily as example rather than authority, because it is our contention that her purpose is to illustrate a model of behaviour. Additionally, Parlamente's remarks differ from Saffredent's allusions to works of literature in two ways: firstly, her comments are restricted exclusively to *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, a text diametrically opposed to de Meung's and, secondly because, unlike Saffredent who quotes from the *Roman de la Rose*, but does not mention its title, Parlamente conversely refers to the work using its title, but in the first instance refrains from direct quotation. Both texts were written by male authors, but are put to different use in the mouths of male and female characters: Saffredent quotes directly from the authority of his earlier source, where Parlamente appropriates the *auctoritas* of Chartier and assimilates it into her (female) speech. The absence of quotation serves to throw Parlamente's didactic purpose into sharper relief because it creates another level of authority; the authority of the work has been assimilated by the character, who uses herself as example. For further evidence of this, one need look no further than the contextual vocabulary. In both instances, Parlamente attempts to refute a generalisation made by one of the male *devisants*: in [II, 12], in response to Dagoucin's assertion that the refusal of a woman to give up her chastity can mortally wound a man, Parlamente replies that '*La Belle dame sans mercy nous a aprins à dire que si gracieuse malladye ne met gueres de gens à mort*' (p. 95). The didactic element here is self-evident in the use of the verb *apprendre*. Later, in [VI, 56] as Simontault complains of the pains he has suffered for one woman, Parlamente contradicts him by

²⁹ For a fuller account of the actual historical veracity of the *nouvelles*, see Cholakian (*passim*) and Jourda, II.

replying that *La Belle dame sans mercy* postulates that a man only complains of his suffering at the hands of one woman in the hope of gaining greater comfort in the arms of another 'il siet bien que l'on le die, pour en tirer quelque confort' (p. 352). In this, she quotes from Chartier, using *La Belle dame sans mercy* as a pretext for introducing herself as the example: Simontault is her long-term *serviteur* and by her reply to his barbed comment, she not only deflects the conversation away from herself, but at the same time indicates her understanding of the fickle nature of men's emotions, since what Simontault cannot elicit from her he will solicit elsewhere. The didascalic purpose of her words in this passage is illustrated by Simontault, when he replies that the author of *La Belle dame sans mercy* is 'ung notable docteur [...] qui non seulement est facheux, mais le faict estre toutes celles qui ont leu et suivy sa doctrine' (p. 352, emphasis mine), reinforcing the earlier *apprendre* with the stronger notion of *suivre une doctrine*. Not only does Parlamente match wits with Simontault, but her use of humour and irony to deflate the tension of the situation is a tactic most often practised by the male *devisants*, usually to deflate a moral assertion from one of the ladies. In [II, 20], in the face of intransigent universalising from the men of the company, Parlamente allows Longarine to reject misogynist generalisation 'car, combien qu'il soit advenu à quelque pauvre malheureuse, si est-ce chose qui ne se doibt soupçonner en aultre', before suspending the day's debate by reminding the group of their spiritual, rather than physical, needs (p.155).

Having thus established that example as a literary technique exists in different forms in *L'Heptaméron*, it would be well to examine to what purpose it is put within the text. We have demonstrated that Parlamente's remarks have a didactic usage within the discussions following the tales, and the possibility that the *nouvelles* themselves serve a pedagogic purpose has been the subject of some debate.³⁰ More interesting, however, are the reactions of the *devisants* to the tales and whether, in the course of their discussions, they express an opinion upon the validity of example as a literary technique, particularly as a means of characterising the Woman.

³⁰ See in particular Mary J. Baker, 'The role of the moral lesson in *L'Heptaméron*', *French Studies*, XXXI, (1977), 18-25.

Saffredent proclaims in [I, 3] 'Voilà [...] une histoire que volontiers je vous monstre icy pour *exemple*' (p. 27, emphasis mine). Typically, his use of example is intended to exhort the ladies of the company to adultery by demonstrating the happy infidelity of one woman, a tactic derailed by Ennasuite whose story supports her assertion that 'toutes dames ne sont pas semblables à la Royne de laquelle il a parlé' (p. 27). Reference to works of example is first made by Geburon in [I, 5], who mentions 'celles qui ont tant leu et veu de beaulx exemples' (p. 37), undermining the validity and value of such works by illustrating the virtue of the common boatwoman, who would have had no access to, no ability to (and quite possibly no inclination to) read such literature. This is underlined by Nomerfide, who adds 'tout ainsy que la vertu de la batteliere ne honnore point les aultres femmes si elles ne l'ensuyvent, aussi le vice d'une aultre ne les peut deshonoré' (p. 38). This refusal on the part of the female *devisants* to accept example as all-encompassing is found repeatedly throughout the text. Oisille echoes Nomerfide when she points out in [II, 15] that: 'Pour une qui n'est pas saige [...] il ne fault pas que les autres soient estimées telles', countered immediately by Saffredent's assertion that all women are alike under their skirts (p. 128).

The use of example by the different sexes is put to very different ends in *L'Heptaméron*, as succinctly illustrated in the first epilogue [I, 1] when Simontault defines the purpose of his story-telling thus: 'Vous trouverez que depuis que Eve fait pecher Adan toutes les femmes ont prins possession de tormenter, tuer et danner les hommes' (p. 18). It is his intention to illustrate the vice of all women through the example of one. The male story-tellers, almost without exception, subscribe to the gynaecophobic, 'antifeminist' school of thought. Every tale of the bad woman is accepted as an exemplum of the evil nature of Woman, indicative of the vice ontologically inherent to the sex as a whole. Any good woman represented in the *nouvelles* is an apotheosis, the exception which proves the rule, the ideal to which Woman, in all her wickedness, should aspire. As Simontault remarks:

Ce n'est chose si nouvelle, mes dames, d'oyr dire de vous quelque acte vertueulx qu'il me semble ne debvoir estre celé, mais plus tost escript en lettres d'or, afin de servir aux femmes d'exemple et aux hommes d'admiration...[v]oyant en sexe fragile ce que la fragilité refuse. (p. 392)

This attitude is emphasised throughout *L'Heptaméron* by the men through the use of singular and plural. Speaking of men in [II, 19], Dagoucin asserts that 'Il y en a qui *ayment* si fort et si parfaitement qu'ilz *aymeroient* autant mourir que de sentir ung desir contre l'honneur et la conscience de leur maistresse' (p.152, emphasis mine). This contrasts with Hircan's dare in [II, 18] to 'trouvez-moy *une femme* qui ait esté si ferme, si patiente et si loyalle en amour' (pp.140-141, emphasis mine). Likewise in [II, 19], Saffredent satirically remarks 'je crains tant [...] desplaire aux dames [...] que, sans exprès commandement, je n'eusse osé raconter *leurs imperfections*' (pp. 152-153, emphasis mine). In point of fact, he is to talk of only one woman, but it is symptomatic of the masculine attitude presented in the *Heptaméron* that, by using example, the vice of one is commuted to all. Even whilst admitting their own imperfections, the male *devisants* are only too willing to find imperfection existing to a greater degree in Woman. It must be reiterated here that Dagoucin cannot be held to be representative of the men as a whole – it has been shown that his aspirations to Neo-platonic philosophising have brought scorn from the other men of the company. His motives in this are not made explicit, but seem dubious in their sincerity; the reader might reasonably infer that in the eternal struggle to win favour from the ladies, Dagoucin hopes that to set himself up in opposition to the other men will bring him at least into the women's sympathies. From here, a man considers his seduction halfway to completion.

The 'antifeminist' tenor of some of the tales by male narrators and their intended purpose is attacked, but not completely refuted, by the female story-tellers. Indeed, the female *devisants* use example to attempt to force an acknowledgement from the men not to preclude the existence of exceptions to their generalisations. Even in this, however, their success is limited and they are aware that any pretext will serve

to malign Woman. Oisille notes in [III, 24] that: 'soubz couleur de blasmer et reprendre [...] la Royne de Castille [...] les hommes se debordoient si fort à medire des femmes' (p. 202). Similarly, Parlamente laments in [I, 9] that: 'vous estimez les femmes toutes pareilles' (p. 54), whilst at the same time exhorting Saffredent to admit the possibility of the existence of virtue in at least one woman: 'si je vous en nommois une, bien aymane [...] et toutesfois femme de bien [...] advoueriez-vous que la chose véritable seroit possible?' – 'Vraiment, dist-il, ouy.' (p. 54). By telling a true story, an eye-witness account of a virtuous woman, she does not seek to negate totally Saffredent's allegation of lubricity in Woman, but at least to moderate it into a refusal of iniquity in all women. Thus, example as a literary technique has been adopted and adapted in *L'Heptaméron*: the male *devisants* practise the 'antifeminist' use of example and believe unflinchingly in the moral superiority of men. The female *devisants* have adapted the 'feminist' use of example, seeking not to prove the superiority of Woman to man, but to contend that, even in the face of masculine derision and obduracy, virtuous women can exist. MacLean notes that ratiocination was 'not considered [...] to be a convincing method of argument', as 'imprecise generalizations [...] facetious speculation [...] and [...] facile comparisons with nature may all come under the description of 'raisonnements'' (p. 36). In the light of this information, it would not be unreasonable to view the masculine practice of using example to generalise upon the nature of Woman as a form of ratiocination. In addition, the fact that this form of argument has been dismissed as dubious by MacLean might be said to undermine the credibility of the male *devisants*. As a necessary next stage we will examine the tales as narratives, in order to ascertain common vices and virtues in Woman and Man.

Attempting to categorise the women depicted in the *nouvelles* according to the preconceived image they might be seen to represent is not easy: the reader must be guided in this by the prevailing consensus of opinion at the end of each epilogue and it is not uncommon to find two interlocutors of the same sex in agreement from which to infer a consensus. Most usually, Parlamente and Oisille concur, as do Hircan and Saffredent.

On the basis of this inferred consensus, the women portrayed in *L'Heptaméron* can be grouped into four categories, which we have defined thus:

i) The Good Woman, who is virtuous, chaste and honourable in all things. She is usually religious and vigorously defensive of her chastity, even to the point of death [I, 2]. The Good Woman is devoted to her husband, attempting as far as she can to steer him from sin [IV, 38; VII, 67]. She sees the goodness in people and does not fail to turn an opportunity for wickedness to good [II, 13].

ii) The Weak Woman who aspires to goodness but who is impure in some way, either by allowing her *serviteur* to become her lover and thus tainting *parfaict amour* with carnality, or by having dubious motives [I, 3], often including a desire for revenge [I, 4]. The Woman who, in attempting goodness, sins inadvertently [V, 45], or unwittingly creates the opportunity for sin [V, 46].

iii) The Tainted Woman whose intentions are dishonest, manifested in attention-seeking and a desire for revenge [II, 15]. The Woman who willingly takes lovers [III, 25], who disobeys friends and family to marry in secret [V, 40; VI, 63]. The Woman who has sinned but repented [IV, 32].

iv) The Wicked Woman, who is wanton in her affairs, taking many lovers [I, 1; V, 49]. Her intentions are evil and duplicitous. She is the Woman who commits incest [IV, 30, 33]. The predominant characteristic of the Wicked Woman which distinguishes her from the Tainted Woman is her hypocrisy, whether in the face of society by portraying herself as virtuous when she is not [II, 20; V, 43], in the sight of God [IV, 33; VI, 60; VII, 61], or by lying at someone else's expense to save herself [V, 43; VII, 70]. The Wicked Woman usually dies in a state of mortal sin [I, 1] without the possibility of Christian salvation.

For the purposes of this chapter it is necessary similarly to categorise the men found in the work in order to provide a control against which to place and compare women. It should, however, be noted that the criteria for categorising the male figures differ in tenor and must therefore be cited. That the criteria should differ between the sexes is hardly surprising: in an era, society and milieu where double standards were

so effectively imposed upon the sexes, literary characters would hardly be *vraisemblables* if their behaviour did not reflect those standards. Therefore, we have divided the four categories of men described by the *devisants* thus:

i) The Good Man, the noble and perfect *serviteur* who asks no more than, or is satisfied with, chaste love from the object of his affections [I, 9]. The man who does not reveal his love, even to his lady, for fear of dishonouring her [III, 24; VII, 70]. The man who performs good works [IV, 32], who takes back his sinning wife with forgiveness [VI, 60; VII, 61]. The Good Man is the father/brother who defends his daughter's/sister's honour, risking even death [II, 12]. The chaste lover who wastes away, or sublimates his love into the Christian faith [I, 9; II, 19; III, 24].

ii) The Impure Man, a man whose motives are not altogether clear: although prepared to play the role of *serviteur*, his love is usually tainted with a desire for revenge [I, 3], or carnal knowledge [I, 10; II, 18]. The husband who neglects his wife out of duty to King/master [I, 6], the man who sins unknowingly or causes sin through unwitting blindness [III, 23]. The man who steers his wife from sin [IV, 35].

iii) The Sinful Man, the man who is unfaithful to his wife, despite her goodness [I, 8; IV, 37, 38]. The avaricious father/husband who ignores his wife's needs [II, 15; III, 21; IV, 40]. The man who takes advantage of another's good nature [III, 25], or who is willing to betray another [VII, 67; VIII, 71].

iv) The Wicked Man, the man who will take by force what he cannot take by persuasion (I, 4; II, 12), he is the rapist and murderer [I, 2; V, 45; VI, 51]. Again, a predominant characteristic of the Wicked Man which distinguishes him from the Sinful Man is hypocrisy. However, in contrast to the Wicked Woman, the Wicked Man is a religious hypocrite, the debauched rapist, murderer and avaricious home-wrecker who is a member of the religious orders [III, 22, 23; IV, 31, 33; V, 46, 48; VIII, 72].

It should be noted at this point that, for the purposes of clarity, not all of those tales falling into each category have been cited. If categories 2 and 3 are then dispensed with for both male and female, the diametrically opposed categories of

Good/Wicked remain. This will necessarily entail a loss of examples which may have proven of some merit in illuminating the prevailing notion of Woman, but by illustrating the polarised categories for each gender, a greater appreciation of the double standards operating for the sexes can be achieved. We have elected to use the terms 'tales of' or 'tales about' in our categorisation and tabulation. Neither term is particularly satisfactory but, as we shall see, although a *nouvelle* may focus predominantly upon one character in the narrative, it is often the case that a tale recounted purportedly to throw into relief one particular aspect of male or female behaviour may contain a deeper, more critical level of social commentary.

Tales of :

GOOD WOMEN	I; 2, 5, 8, 9, 10	IV; 31, 37, 38
	II; 12, 13, 19	V; 41, 42
	III; 21, 22, 26, 27	VI; 54, 59
		VII; 67, 69, 70
GOOD MEN	I; 9	IV; 32, 35
	II; 12, 19, 20	V; 42
	III; 24	VI; 60
		VII; 61, 63, 64, 70
WICKED WOMEN	I; 1	V; 43, 49
	II; 20	VI; 53, 60
	III; 26, 30	VII; 61, 70
	IV; 33, 36	VIII; 72
WICKED MEN	I; 1, 2, 4, 5	V; 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 48
	II; 12	VI; 51, 56
	III; 22, 23, 27	VII; 61, 62, 66
	IV; 31, 33, 40	VIII; 72

When tabulated, these results produce a striking symmetry not immediately apparent within the text. They also provide information on the relationship between the sexes and their prevailing attitudes to one another, particularly because the tales of Wicked Women are illustrative of the prevailing, universalised notion of Woman.

<i>Tales about</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Told by women</i>	<i>Told by men</i>
Good Women	22	11	11
Good Men	13	5	8
Wicked Women	13	3	10
Wicked Men	22	11	11

This internal symmetry is at once striking and significant: tales which centre upon Good Women equal those upon Wicked Men in number and are divided equally amongst the sexes. Tales of Good Men and Wicked Women are also equal in number, but more men than women tell a tale of a Good Man, and more men than women narrate the history of a Wicked Woman. Given the symmetrical nature of the work's structure, with equally balanced numbers of male and female *devisants*, and Marguerite's original intention of creating another *Decameron* of 100 tales, it becomes not inconceivable that there should be an infra-symmetry to mirror *L'Heptaméron's* exo-symmetry. However, as we have observed, few of the tales told can be said to be exclusively centred upon one character and, in the sexual and power dynamic of the group, competition for attention or commendation from one *devisant* can dictate another's motives in telling their tales. The tale of a Wicked Woman narrated by a man is often, as will be examined later, used more to highlight the virtue of the Good Man thrown into opposition with her. Likewise, the Good Woman serves to throw the Wicked Man into sharper relief.

Of the thirteen stories of Wicked Women in *L'Heptaméron*, ten are narrated by male *devisants*: one by Dagoucin, two by Geburon, two by Hircan, two by Simontault and three by Saffredent. Each of the men, therefore, tells at least one story of a Wicked Woman. It should be noted, however, that the tale told by Dagoucin [VIII, 72] centres upon the corruption within the monastic orders and the Wicked Abbess is mentioned more as an aside to his story.

That Saffredent should tell three of these tales is only to be expected of the most staunch anti-'feminist' in the group. Of the Wicked Women he depicts, one is a

hypocrite in the face of society [II, 20], another a hypocrite in the sight of God [VII, 61] and although all are wanton, one is particularly so [III, 26], debilitating her noble lover with unnatural practices until he is weakened to the brink of physical collapse (p. 213). Saffredent's great sparring partner in the verbal bouts between the sexes is Hircan, whose inflammatory remarks are multiple. Hircan enjoys provocation, often playing Devil's advocate [V, 4] and presenting himself in the worst possible light as a potential rapist and murderer (p. 34). It is Hircan who relates the story of the mother who commits incest and lives to see her son marry his own daughter [III, 30], and of the wanton mistress of the King who took several other lovers [V, 49].

Having established the male preoccupation with perpetuating the image of the Wicked Woman through their story-telling, it should come as no surprise that they are responsible for the narration of more than three-quarters of the tales unfavourable to the female. Vastly more interesting is the fact that three *nouvelles* about the Wicked Woman are recounted by women.

The first of the tales of Wicked Women told by women is provoked by a woman (IV, 36). Parlamente, in response to Ennasuite's implications that her moral standards are implausibly strict, retorts: 'je ne lairray pas [...] desirer que chascun se contentast de son mary comme je faictz du mien' (p. 261). Ennasuite, piqued by this, accuses Parlamente of pride and, 'pour la recompenser contre [s]a femme', is passed the burden of story-telling by Hircan (pp. 260-261), whose motives are almost invariably suspect. In telling [IV, 35], therefore, Ennasuite is motivated by the desire to take revenge upon Parlamente, a desire she sublimates into her *nouvelle*. Similarly, she speaks disparagingly after [VI, 52] of false virtue (p. 335) as a prelude to illustrating how the apparently unimpeachable woman can be unmasked [VI, 53]. It is not immediately obvious that Ennasuite directs this tale at anyone in particular, although she certainly feels that Parlamente's morals are too strict to be practicable. Hence, as Ennasuite has condemned false pride, one might conclude that this is a subtle attack upon Parlamente, implying that Hircan's wife is less virtuous than she would have others believe. Above all, as Davis notes, Ennasuite 'is given to remarks

of a personal nature' (p. 42), reacting violently to any remark she sees as a personal slight [VII, 67] (p. 395).

Oisille, as the only other woman to relate the *nouvelle* of a Wicked Woman, is not motivated by personal justification or by revenge to tell her tale, rather her purpose is didactic. Her *nouvelle* juxtaposes the Good and the Wicked Woman, her intention obvious when she remarks: 'Il me semble que vous devez tirer exemple de cecy, pour vous garder de mectre vostre affection aux hommes' [VII, 70] (p. 418). Oisille, it should be noted, is also one of the three women to recount the story of a Good Man. Of these, there are again thirteen.

Given the attitudes of the male *devisants* to the virtues of Man and the vices of Woman, it is inevitable that the men will be the major exponents of the Good Man as, indeed, they are. Of greater interest is the fact that the women of the group tell approximately one third of these tales. This is indicative of the *devisants'* attitudes towards example through truth: men tell tales of the Wicked Woman to emphasise the vice of all women and, by extension, confer glory upon the whole of their sex by illustrating the virtue of one. As has been discussed, the purpose of the female *devisants* is more equally balanced in its didacticism. Although Ennasuite's motives are dubious, the presence of tales about the Wicked Woman told by women indicates the female acceptance of the existence of evil in some women. More importantly, though, they tell their tales to an exemplary end. It is not impossible, therefore, to conclude that the women story-tellers should accept that there be goodness in some, if not all, men, just as they exhort the men to accept that vice is not endemic to all women.

Turning first to the tales of Good Men told by men, the first is told by Dagoucin [I, 9], after the speech in which he extols the virtues of Neo-platonic love (pp. 47-48). Thus, his story-telling is to reinforce the possibility of the existence of Neo-platonic love in the tale of the perfect (but financially inadequate) lover, who wastes away at the prospect of seeing his lady married to another. His second *nouvelle* expounds the virtues of the brother who will not expose his sister's chastity to the

dishonourable intentions of his employer, the Prince, and who finally resorts to assassinating him to save his sister's honour [II, 12]. This proves extremely unpopular with the other male *devisants*, who contend that he was a traitor and a bad servant to his master, whilst the ladies argue that he was a good brother and citizen, ridding the kingdom of a despot. The third tale of the Good Man [II, 20] is told by Saffredent to laud the virtues of the perfect *serviteur*, content (for the mean time at least) with the chaste love of his lady, who, unfortunately for him, prefers to take her pleasure with the stable boy. It is Dagoucin again in [III, 24] who tells of the chaste love that Elisor held secretly for his Queen for over seven years. The Queen, to test her love for him as he has tested his for her, banishes him for seven years. Unfortunately for the Queen, after the seven years have passed and her love increased, in his enforced exile, Elisor has sublimated his love of her into love of God and has become a religious hermit (p. 200). Hircan, typically, provides a little light relief in [IV, 35], as he tells of the wise husband who cures his wife's fancy for their priest in a farcical bedroom beating, disguised as the priest (p. 258). Geburon provides the sixth of the eight *nouvelles* told by men with [VI, 60], the tale of the Good husband who accepts his wife back into his household, even after she has staged her own death in an effort to remain with her lover. This is echoed directly by Saffredent, who tells of the virtuous husband who twice forgives his runaway wife [VII, 61]. Finally, in [VII, 63], Dagoucin depicts the perfect understanding between the Good husband, who has no wish to be a party to the Prince's debauchery because of his perfect love for his *maistresse*, and his wife, who supports him in his plan to avoid this temptation.

Of the eight tales of Good Men told by men, half then are told by Dagoucin. As the self-appointed advocate of Neo-platonic virtue, it is hardly surprising that, of his four narratives, three depict the man who is faithful and chaste in his romantic affairs. It must be noted that Dagoucin does not always portray his women so sympathetically, for example in [I, 9] the girl who, by 'dissimulating' her love, gives her *serviteur* no hope that he may continue in his service to her, even if she is married to another. Likewise, in [III, 24], the Queen is represented as unjustly harsh in her

treatment of Elisor and it is asserted that her pain upon his desertion is no more than she deserved: 'ung tel deuil que sa cruaulté avoit merit ' (p. 200).

Saffredent is even less charitable towards the women he depicts in his tales of the Good Man. Where Dagoucin finds it possible to laud the virtuous man for himself, Saffredent makes his Good Men doubly virtuous. In partnering his Good Men with Wicked Women, he not only throws the virtues of men into sharper relief but also takes every opportunity to condemn Woman. It is interesting that Saffredent's second tale is in many ways a replica of the preceeding tale told by Geburon and can be seen to be indicative of his character, at times vicious and vindictive, that he must outdo Geburon by telling of a woman who is taken back by her husband twice [VII, 61].

With the exception of only two narratives, all the Good Men represented by the male *devisants* are made more so by comparison with women less virtuous than they. In the absence of such women, the Good Men are put into opposition with men less virtuous [II, 12; VII, 63]. This juxtaposition serves to highlight the narrators' belief in the superiority of men whilst at the same time reiterating their conviction of the inferiority of Woman.

What, then, are the motivations of the women who speak of the Good Man? Two of these female storytellers are those who also recounted the histories of Wicked Women, Oisille and Ennasuite, and in portraying the Good Man, they are joined by Parlamente. The first of such tales recounted by a woman is told by Ennasuite [II, 19]. It might be said to be as much the story of a good woman, but she remarks at the story's close that 'l'amour de l'homme [...] [s'est] monstr e la plus grande' (p. 151). Oisille, who tells of the husband who forces his wife to drink from the skull of her dead lover, provides her narrative with a didactic end, as is her custom. In recounting [IV, 32], she exhorts the ladies of the company to trust in God to protect them from infidelity and a fate worse than death. This tale might be seen to have a moderately happy ending, in that the husband forgives his repentant wife, but it must not be forgotten that he is motivated more by a desire to ensure his succession than by a true spirit of forgiveness (p. 245). Parlamente's first narrative [V, 42] is, again, as much

the story of the Good Woman who resists the advances of the Prince as it is of the Prince who does not force her into a sexual encounter. Eventually, the young heroine is rewarded with a fortuitous marriage. Like Oisille, Parlamente's purpose is to advocate constant vigilance against incontinence, but she is undermined by Saffredent, who declares 'je dictz que ce seigneur estoit plus louable' [V, 42] (p. 295). His use of the word *seigneur*, with its connotations of *droit de seigneur*, indicates his conviction that the Prince was the more virtuous of the two for resisting what he might have taken as rightfully his. Parlamente's second story of a Good Man [VII, 64] is an echo of [II, 19], since the good and perfect lover sublimates his earthly love into love of God and becomes a monk. There is, however, a cautionary element to the tale, as the lady presented difficulties to the marriage in the hope of increasing her lover's affection by suspense. Her fickle nature is punished by a life of loneliness, his virtue by a life of worship and ultimate salvation [VII, 64]. This emphasis upon celestial rather than terrestrial love is found once again in Oisille's final tale of a Good Man [VII, 70]. Although the love between the young widow and her *serviteur* has been chaste, it is undone by the lust and jealousy of another. Oisille's homily to the group contends that, however chaste and virtuous a love may be, one would do better to fix one's affections upon God, as earthly relations can only end in sadness (p. 418). Again, it is apparent that the female *devisants* regularly use their story-telling to a didactic end, in opposition to the men of the company and as part of a constant rejection of misogynist generalisation.

Thus it appears that the male *devisants* gain ammunition from their stories of the Wicked Woman and the Good Man. Their narratives function primarily as a means of generalising about a whole sex from a tale of one person, attributing all evils to Woman and all virtues to Man. What, then, can they have to gain from telling tales of the Good Woman and the Wicked Man? In this, they participate equally with the ladies of the company, as has been shown (see table above).

As might reasonably be expected in the light of the above statement, the tales told by men of the Good Woman are not devoted to the elevation of women. The first

tale of a Good Woman to be narrated by a man is recounted by Dagoucin, who, although he cannot be called a champion of Woman's cause, is more willing than the other men of the company to admit the existence of virtue in women, self-interested motives notwithstanding. However, tale [I, 9] is as much the story of a perfect man as it is of a Good Woman, more so even, in that his hero wastes away at the prospect of seeing his lady married to another. The lady, paradoxically, is not presented as blameless. Although she follows society's prescriptions for the Woman, and gives the gentleman no indication of her love, she stands accused of 'dissimulation' and of being the cause of her lover's death (p. 53). Dagoucin is again the narrator of the second tale in this category [II, 12], a tale which emphasises the moral dilemma of the brother and places little upon the Woman, save to say that she is 'tant femme de bien' (p. 90) that she affords the Duke no opportunity to declare himself and that, although reduced to virtual poverty as a result of her brother's actions, she 'continua de plus en plus sa vie honneste en ses vertuz' (p. 94). Dagoucin also recounts [IV, 37], the example of the Good wife, who regains her husband's affections through patience and forbearance. Significantly, she is not wholly without blame, as she allows her husband's household to fall into disrepair whilst depressed by her husband's infidelities, until a friend 'luy remonstra la *faulte* qu'elle faisoit' (pp. 266-267, emphasis mine).

Typically, the tales told by Saffredent in this category are not told to glorify the Woman. His first tale [III, 26] is as much about the wicked, wanton Woman who almost kills the young nobleman with her sexual appetites as it is the story of the Good Woman who refuses to reveal her love for the same young man and who dies honourably, having confessed to her husband: 'Dont le mary, plus contant que jamais, augmenta le regret et la douleur qu'il avoit de l'avoir perdue' (p. 219). Saffredent's second tale of the Good Woman belongs more to the Hircan school of amusing anecdote than it does to the Saffredent school of invective [VI, 54]. In this, the wife who sees by the shadows on the wall that her husband is kissing her chambermaid, paints herself as a fool in order to distract her husband's attention by laughing 'je suis si sottte que je rys à mon ombre' (p. 343). True to form, Hircan provides a similar tale,

of the lascivious husband tricked by both wife and servant [VII, 69]. This tale exists more for the gentlemen of the company to laugh at the man in the tale, than it does for them to applaud the virtuous maid (p. 399). Simontault relates [VII, 67] of the dishonest man who, along with his wife, is left on a remote island to reflect upon his sin. The Good Woman supports her husband, defends his body from wild animals after death and is rewarded for her faith in God by returning to France a heroine. Unfortunately for the female cause, Simontault's tale points more to the glory of God in the Woman than it does to glory for her alone: 'je [...] loue bien les vertuz que Dieu a mises en vous, lesquelles se monstrent plus grandes que le subiect est plus infirme' (p. 394). What these *devisants* give with one hand, they take away with the other.

The five remaining tales of Good Women told by men have a different function: these are the tales in which the Good Woman exists solely to throw into sharper relief the debauchery and hypocrisy of the religious orders. In these tales, the Good Woman is one who resists or outwits the hypocritical holy man and the male *devisants* seek more to damn the religious fraudsters than to laud their unwilling prey [I, 5; III, 22; IV, 31; V, 41].

Tale [I, 5] of the boatwoman who tricks the two *Cordeliers* in the face of impending rape is intended by Geburon to serve as a cautionary tale illustrating the potential evil of the religious hypocrites '[qui] parlent comme anges, et sont importuns comme diables' (p. 76). It is also Geburon who narrates [III, 22] of the Good Woman, a nun, sought by the religious hypocrite, her Confessor. Although Marie-Heroet is able to resist the advances of the priest, and even able to endure her unjust imprisonment, she cannot bring about her own release. She must look to another woman for her salvation and rescue. Significantly, as noted above, this woman is the Queen of Navarre, the author herself (p. 184). Whether there is any historical accuracy in this tale is uncertain, but Cholakian claims (pp. 44-8) that, in other stories where Marguerite places herself in the action, it is usually founded upon truth. Regardless of this information, what remains significant is that Sister Marie cannot triumph alone against the lascivious priest – the Good Woman needs another good

woman to come to her aid, an indication of the level of depravity to which the Abbot had sunk.

Geburon recounts the third tale of the Good Woman who is the victim of a religious man [IV, 31]. In this, as in his previous narratives, the Woman escapes without having actually been raped, despite the best efforts of her pursuer. In this tale, the *Cordelier* murders the servants and kidnaps the object of his affections, having disguised her as a monk. As was true of some of the other tales of the Good Woman told by men, this tale is less about the victim, more about the depraved religious order which keeps a harem of captive women, and the virtuous husband who rescues his wife and spares the life of the *Cordelier* (p. 240). The final tale of the Good Woman in a religious context is told by Saffredent. His is less black than those told by Geburon, his aim is more to laugh at the monk who is thwarted in his perverted wishes than to applaud the naïve honesty of the Woman who refuses her 'penance' [V, 41].

Similarly, and more interestingly, of the eleven tales told of Wicked Men by men, eight are religious in orientation, of which four have been discussed above [I, 5; III, 22; IV, 31; V, 41]. Simontault tells of the priest whose sister is pregnant, although to all intents and purposes she is a saintly virgin [IV, 33]. It transpires that the priest is himself the father of his sister's child, and both are burned at the stake (p. 249). Although the priest falls into the category of the Wicked Man, the tale juxtaposes another male character with him, the wise and virtuous Charles d'Angoulême. Not only is this authorial testimony to the virtue of Marguerite's father, but it is also designed to create a greater contrast between the religious hypocrite and the true Christian. Typically, Hircan's narrative in [VI, 56] is humorous in tone and illustrates the avaricious nature of the *Cordelier*, who marries one of his colleagues off to a wealthy young woman. Both are found out when the bride and her mother attend mass at a different Church than usual and later remove the groom's nightcap to find his tonsure - 'sa belle couronne' (p. 351). As might reasonably be expected from one of the male *devisants*, Hircan's tale is intended also to illustrate the folly of the girl's

mother. Where an opportunity exists to laugh at another, male or female, it is not often ignored by the men of the company, especially Hircan. Saffredent tells of the Canon who ruthlessly pursues his suit with a married woman and takes her as his mistress (VII, 61). Her sensible husband moves his household away, only to have his wife run back to the arms of her Canon on two occasions. After her second escape, she remains with her lover for many years as his wife and mother to their children before being forced to return by Mme la Régente, Marguerite's mother (p. 375). Typical of Saffredent, this tale is as much, if not more, the story of the wanton, hypocritical woman and her wise, forgiving husband than it is the story of an Wicked Man. Dagoucin relates the final tale of the Wicked religious Man in the tale of the priest who seduces a naïve nun whilst laying out a corpse [VIII, 72].

These tales provide the means for Marguerite to air her religious preoccupations and their existence in the work offers the opportunity for the *devisants* to explore the religious debate on-going in society at that time. Literature has always been the medium through which authors have expressed dissatisfaction with organised religion and *L'Heptaméron* is no exception. Religious dissent and protest was endemic in the century of the Reformation. Inherent in the transformation of feudal France into a more unified nation was the increased power of the monarch as divine ruler. One consequence of this was the tendency of François Ier to fill the ecclesiastical hierarchy with political allies and family members, resulting in a high rate of absenteeism, a rapid growth in corruption and a decline in spirituality within the Gallican Church. It is no coincidence that so many of the rapes, attempted rapes and seductions are the work of monks or religious men in *L'Heptaméron*. Anticlerical tales from the women of the company indicate an extension of Oisille's constant exhortation to have faith in God alone and to avoid priestly misrepresentations, similar to the Protestant movement's belief in the ultimate truth of the Bible alone. That the male *devisants* lay so much blame at the feet of the Franciscans and *Cordeliers* is not only a manifestation of contemporary feeling towards the orders, but also a ruse on the part

of the men where, by comparison, their seductions and infidelities become mere indiscretions.

Only three tales told by men of Wicked Men do not revile the religious orders. In the same way that the male *devisants* tell no tale which lauds a woman unreservedly, they tell no story of a bad man (other than a clergyman) that is without some kind of extenuating circumstance. The first, told by Simontault, portrays both husband and wife as Wicked [I, 1]. That this tale can only end badly is evidenced by the fact that the natural order is reversed within the marriage: 'le mary [...] se laissoit gouverner par elle' (p. 13). This is an unnatural union with an unnatural woman. Although the husband is no less blameworthy than his wife, it is at her door that the narrator lays the blame 'depuis que Eve feit pecher Adan toutes les femmes ont prins possession de tormenter, tuer et danner les hommes' (p. 18). Accordingly, the husband is permitted time in the galleys to repent, the wife left to die miserably in sin. Dagoucin's tale of the virtuous brother who preserves his sister's chastity by killing his employer [II, 12] engenders a fierce debate between the sexes, as has already been discussed (see above). Ultimately, the blame is again laid upon the Woman: 'mes dames [...] gardez que voz beaultez ne facent point faire de plus cruels meurdres que celluy que j'ay compté' (p. 95). Simontault's tale of the lascivious husband who misleads his wife in order to rape their maid on the Feast of the Holy Innocents [V, 45] lays as much emphasis upon the stupidity of the wife as it does upon the husband's sexual appetites and prowess. Indeed, Hircan finds much to be applauded in this hero and sees only admirable qualities in the husband who can 'satisfy' both wife and chambermaid in the snow-covered garden in one morning (p. 307). These tales are indicative of the prevailing masculine attitude to women and there is little blame which cannot be laid at the feet of woman by the male *devisant*, even including masculine misconduct which can be laughed or extenuated away. For the male narrator, to portray the Woman as at fault provides another means of reinforcing the patriarchal value system. It falls necessarily to the Woman, therefore, to defend her sex and attempt to redress the balance a little.

Oisille relates the first narrative of the Good Woman in [I, 2], the mule-driver's wife, raped and murdered by their servant. In this, her purpose is a didactic one, her story told to 'augmenter le cuer à garder ceste belle vertu de chasteté' (p. 21). The next may be seen as a cautionary tale aimed at the men, told by Longarine of the Good Wife who, in attempting to keep her husband faithful, unwittingly cuckolds him [I, 8]. It is then to Parlamente that the burden of defending the female sex falls in [I, 10] of Floride's attempts to have her *serviteur*, Amadour, remain honourable and of his efforts to render her not so. This tale is also a cautionary one, designed to warn the ladies in the company of the inevitability of men's carnal desires, an issue amply expounded by Hircan who states: 'oncques homme qui aymast parfaitement, ou qui fust aymé d'une dame, ne failloit d'en avoir bonne yssue s'il a faict la poursuite comme il appartient' (p. 83). It must also be seen as yet another sweeping generalisation, unfavourable in its certainty of the lustful Woman. Parlamente also narrates [II, 13] of the virtuous lady who restores the sinning sea-captain enamoured of her to the affections of his wife. Told by way of example, this tale exhorts the Woman to turn any opportunity for sin into good works (p. 108). Ennasuite becomes the advocate of Neo-platonic love and the sublimation of earthly into divine love, in her tale of the chaste lovers who, unable to marry, join the religious orders [II, 19]. The next tale of the Good Woman, recounted by Parlamente, differs slightly in purpose from its precedents. In [III, 21], Parlamente's discussion of Rolandine is intended not to refute the existence of Wicked Women, but simply to avoid reinforcing the existing evidence, since she is aware of the futility of assuming a diametrically opposed view to that of the male story-tellers. As she states in her prologue: 'Je n'entreprends pas [...] de reparer voz fautes, mais ouy bien de me garder de les ensuivre.' (p. 157). The didactic bent of the female story-telling re-emerges in the tale told by Ennasuite of the virtuous wife who refuses the tenacious secretary, as an exhortation to beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing [III, 27]. Unfortunately, this is undermined by Saffredent, who remarks: 'Par Dieu [...] ce n'est pas grand honneur à

une honneste femme de refuser ung si laid homme que vous paingnez ce secretaire' (p. 223).

Longarine provides another model of womanly behaviour and an exhortation not to desert the faithless husband in [IV, 38] of the Good wife who, worried that her husband is making himself physically ill through his affair, goes to the home of his mistress. Here she performs the good act of cleaning the hovel where her husband spends his nights, as a result of which he returns home: 'Croyez, mes dames, qu'il y a bien peu de mariz que patience et amour de la femme ne puisse gagner à la longue' (p. 271). Parlamente's narrative in [V, 42], discussed above, of the young woman who resists the advances of the Prince and is eventually rewarded by a good marriage constitutes another model of conduct for the Woman. Virtue in the weaker vessel is all the more laudable and Parlamente uses her story to advocate constant self-control: 'Je vous prie qu'à son exemple nous demorions victorieuses de nous-mesmes, car c'est la plus louable victoire que nous puissions avoir' (p. 294). The next tale of a Good Woman told by a woman is [VI, 59], recounted by Longarine to caution the men of the company against suspecting their innocent wives. The Good Wife in the story has several chaste *serviteurs*, but is suspected by her husband of having been unchaste with them. Hence, when her husband makes an assignation with her chambermaid, she contrives to be there and reminds her husband of his hypocrisy: 'Car une femme belle et honneste n'est point moins vertueuse pour estre aymée [...] mais ung homme merite bien grande punition, qui prent la peyne de pourchasser une qui ne l'ayme point pour faire tort à sa femme' (p. 363). That jealousy and suspicion can be damaging is reinforced by Oisille in [VII, 70], the final tale of the Good Woman told by a woman. The good and virtuous widow who enjoys a chaste relationship with her *serviteur* is done to death by the machinations of the jealous Duchess who, in her turn, is brought down by the eavesdropping servant. This model of good behaviour personified in the widow is contrasted with the wicked behaviour of the Duchess, in a tale which illustrates that it is in fact better not to love at all 'car, quelque honneste ou

vertueuse [que vostre affection] soyt, elle a tousjours à la fin quelque mauveys desboire' (p. 418).

It is evident, therefore, that there is a strong pedagogical element in the women's stories of the Good Woman. Models of behaviour for the Woman are illustrated, either through the depiction of the *apogee* to which women should aspire, or by portraying the nadir of womanly behaviour to be avoided. In two cases one finds advocated a code of conduct for the man as well as the Woman [I, 8; VII, 70]. It would be well, then, to examine whether, in recounting tales of the Wicked Man, the female *devisants* advocate an ideal of masculine behaviour by depicting its polar opposite.

Oisille's first tale of the Wicked Man is, as has already been discussed above, the first tale of a Good Woman [I, 1]. It must therefore be seen to be more the story of the Good Woman who refuses her servant than it is the tale of the obsessed man who rapes and murders in the face of resistance [I, 2]. Ennasuite's tale of the attempted rape of the Flemish princess [I, 4] has a certain similarity to its predecessor, in that both women have previously refused their attacker. The *muletière* 'le reprint [...] aigrement, le menassant de le faire battre et chasser à son mary' [I, 2] (p. 19), the Princess gives a 'responce contraire' [I, 4] (p. 28). One might reasonably conclude that the didactic purpose of this tale told by Ennasuite is not only the advocacy of strict morality for the ladies of the company but also an exhortation to the men of the company to accept that 'no' might conceivably mean 'no'. Tale [III, 27] of the Wicked Man told by Ennasuite, mentioned above, is an exhortation to the men of the company not to covet their friends' wives and return generous hospitality with attempted rape. It can also be seen as a warning to the ladies not to be taken in by appearances, but to be constantly vigilant against seduction (p. 223). Parlamente next recounts [IV, 40] of the overly-protective and avaricious brother, who kills his sister's clandestine husband. He compounds his guilt by imprisoning her in a tower in the forest, fearful that she will reveal his part in the murder. Parlamente's narrative purpose is not only to warn the men against covetousness and jealous behaviour, but also to illustrate the dangers of

marrying secretly and for pleasure only: 'que cest exemple vous soit si profitable que nul de vous ayt envye de soy marier pour son plaisir, sans le consentement de ceulx à qui on doibt porter obeissance' (p. 277). In [V, 42] already mentioned above, Parlamente depicts the villainy of the avaricious brother-in-law who attempts to impeach his sister-in-law's honour. It must be accepted that in this tale the unsympathetic family member and the over-zealous lover exist to throw the virtue of the lady into sharp relief; Parlamente's didactic purpose here is to extol the virtue of constant struggle against vice, the male characters exist for her the better to do so. Oisille recounts the villainy of the Italian Duke in [VI, 51], who lies to his wife and makes her instrumental in killing the maid who had aided his son's romantic adventures. Her narrative is intended to warn against the abuse of power in men: 'Regardez [...] quelz sont les effectz de la malice quand elle est joincte à la puissance' (p. 331) and can be seen from an historical perspective to criticise the Italians during a time when France was often at war with Italy. It also continues the development of Oisille's opinion that one should love only God, as even the most perfect of loves can only end badly. The next story of the Wicked Man is found in [VII, 62], where Longarine tells of a young woman raped by her admirer. In his hurry, he has not removed his spurs and, upon hearing the arrival of her servants, jumps out of the bed. The sheet catches on his spurs, leaving his victim naked. This story does little to represent the Wicked Man, as it centres more upon the fact that the victim recounts the story to another in third person, only to give herself away at the end of her narrative. Her honour is therefore irrevocably lost and the group doubts that she was actually raped because 'si elle eut grand desplaisir à faire ung tel acte, elle en eust voullu avoir perdu la memoire' (p. 378-379). In point of fact, this tale is more a code of conduct for the rape victim whereby she should not tell of her disgrace, for fear that others will say she encouraged the attack. The final tale in this category is Oisille's tale of a case of mistaken identity, in which a royal couple are mistaken by a servant for another couple on their wedding night [VII, 66]. This in itself is of little import, what is of more interest is the fact that the servant hoped to surprise the *protonotaire*

of the house *in flagrante delicto* with a chambermaid, which comfortably adumbrates the final three tales of Wicked Men told by women; tales of the Wicked religious Man.

The first of these, [III, 23], is told by Oisille of the husband who asks his Franciscan houseguest if he may sleep with his wife again after the birth of their child. The monk, enamoured of the lady, arranges for the husband to go to his wife at an appointed time. He himself visits the lady and avails himself of her body, whilst she believes it is her husband. Later, when the truth is discovered, as her husband searches for the monk, the lady hangs herself and in so doing smothers her child. The men of the group find the husband to blame for having invited the monk into his home and even the tragic rape victim is not without blame, for she, 'oblyant toute humanité et nature de femme', begs her husband to avenge her (p. 190). Oisille also narrates [V, 46], the second of these three tales. In this, the monk who, having failed in his advances to one woman, ingratiates himself into another household and rapes the daughter of the house whilst supposedly disciplining her for idleness. Although this is undoubtedly a story intended by Oisille to warn against the dangers of inviting the religious hypocrite into one's home, the lady of the house is not blameless. She has been stupidly blind in allowing the monk to visit her daughter's bedroom alone (p. 310). The third and last of these tales, (V, 48), is narrated by Ennasuite of the two monks who conspire to deflower the new bride in the inn at which they are staying. Ennasuite's purpose is a cautionary one, warning of the potential for evil found in the religious hypocrite 'car l'abit est si loing de faire le moyne, que bien souvent par orgueil il le deffaict' (p. 317).

As has clearly been established, the accounts related by women of the Good Woman exist either as cautionary tales or as didactic models of behaviour to advocate a code of conduct for the Woman in various situations. This also holds true for their tales of Wicked Men, but the pedagogical elements of these narratives revolve more around what a woman should do to avoid seduction or rape and what she should do if

she finds herself a victim of such an attack, since one of the predominant characteristics of the Wicked Man is that he is a rapist.

Of *L'Heptaméron*, Patricia Cholakian writes that 'variations of the rape scenario form the work's nucleus' (p. 18). Any discussion of the significance of the rape in *L'Heptaméron* necessitates a definition of the term in order to differentiate between rape and seduction, a distinction of paramount importance in the debate between the *devisants*. The fundamental issue at the heart of the rape debate is that of consent. For the purposes of our study of *L'Heptaméron*, it must be accepted that sexual intercourse without the explicit consent of the Woman be considered rape, a seemingly self-evident definition. However, included under this heading are not only those scenarios where violence or force is used to achieve intercourse against the Woman's wishes, but also those tales where, unbeknown to the Woman (and therefore by extension without her consent) her expected partner's place is taken by another. Tales where intercourse is forced against the express wishes of the Woman are found in [I, 2; V, 45; V, 46]. Tales where intercourse is attempted or plotted against the express wishes of the lady are found in [I, 4, 10; III, 22; IV, 31]. Tales where intercourse takes place without the explicit consent of the lady are found in [I, 8; II, 14; III, 23; V, 48]. Tales of seductions or of attempted seductions are found in [I, 3, 7; II, 16, 18; III, 25, 26; V, 49, 50; VIII, 72].

Significantly, more of the tales in the first category are told by women than by men. Saffredent tells his tale more to emphasise the quick-wittedness of the husband in deceiving his wife. His continuing relationship with the servant he raped is indicative of her desire and consent, thereby diminishing his culpability [V, 45]. Because [I, 2] is the only novella to centre exclusively upon the rape, it merits a close examination. The tale of the obsessed servant who rapes and murders his mistress, the *muletière*, after her rebuttal, is vital to the work as a whole. Coming directly after the tale of a wanton and avaricious woman told by Simontault, the tragic tale of the woman who defends her honour to the point of death is a clear indication to the reader of how the work will unfold and progress: specifically, that the male narrators will,

for the most part, tell tales which are at best unfavourable and at worst downright damning to the Woman. From these, they will reason that all women are thus alike. In return, the female story-tellers, when not motivated by unfavourable inferences made from others' remarks, will attempt to laud the Woman in all her virtue. Cholakian remarks:

Stories about ladies who are surprised in their beds are common enough to the novella genre, as well as to its predecessor, the *fabliau*. But whereas the heroines of the *Decameron* or the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* typically welcome such adventures, Marguerite de Navarre's heroines fight tooth and nail to preserve their honor [sic]. (p. 9)

This is precisely the response of the *muletière*, surprised in her bed by her servant who, when it becomes apparent that she is too quick for him, stabs her [I, 2]. That he has anticipated rejection and the need for force is obvious because he has already been rebuffed and has brought his sword with him. Eventually, she is weakened to the point of incapacity and is raped, lingering for long enough to receive the last rites and make her peace with God whilst her attacker escapes. This not only highlights the profane behaviour of the servant by contrasting it with his victim's saintly conduct, but emphasises the stress placed upon religion and its practice as a fundamental part of woman's expected conduct.

In the second category of tales of attempted intercourse, tales [I, 4 & I, 10] are the more significant in that group. A case might be argued for the inclusion of [I, 5], but it has been omitted in this study because there is no physical attempt made on the boatwoman, only a discussion of the attempt to be made. Likewise, [I, 7] may be rejected, as the man in question fakes an attempted rape upon the mother in order to allow his lover the opportunity to escape. As in the tale discussed above, in tale [I, 4] the lady is surprised in her bed. Again, she fights her attacker off physically until, bleeding and in fear of being recognised, he makes his escape. Common to both tales, then, is the invasion of the Woman's bedroom. In the first of these tales, the servant physically breaks down the partition separating him from his goal, in the second, access is gained by means of a well-oiled trap-door. The breaking down of the

partition in [I, 2] is as symbolic a representation of the violent penetration of the Woman as the silent trap-door is of the ease with which the gentleman expects to enter the princess. One is as determined to succeed as the other is certain of meeting no resistance and although 'l'espée nue' [I, 2] (p. 19) can readily be accepted as a euphemistic representation of the phallus, one must consider that the character of the narrator (Oisille) does not lend itself easily to that interpretation. Baker makes much of the imagery of the staircase and of confined spaces,³¹ but where it is reasonable to see subconsciously sexual imagery in *L'Heptaméron*, it would be anachronistic to attempt a Freudian interpretation of the Queen of Navarre. The possibility for such an interpretation will be considered in Chapter Four.

In both of these tales, the Woman victim is denied speech. In [I, 2] the *muletière* is debilitated by loss of blood until she has lost the power of speech; in [I, 4] the double standards of contemporary social/sexual mores, as represented in the elderly chambermaid, prevent the Princess from denouncing her attacker, for fear that public opinion would not accept that he had been without encouragement and that he had not left unsatisfied. In both cases the attacker escapes and, although in (I, 4) 'il a receu le plus extreme ennuy que gentil homme sçauroit porter' (p. 32), wounded pride aside, he had obviously never doubted his success. Indeed, the Princess' attacker comments to himself that 'je ne devois pas essayer à prandre par force son chaste corps, mais debvois, par long service et humble patience, attendre que amour en fut victorieux' (p. 31), reflecting the common male conception that the role of *serviteur* leads inevitably to sexual gratification.

In [I, 10], however, the roles are somewhat reversed. Believing her *serviteur*, Amadour, is gravely ill, Floride visits him, whereupon he attempts to rape her. No forcible or clandestine entry has been necessary to enter the bedroom, Floride has willingly entered Amadour's space. Her defence is to call for help and then to address herself to his better nature. The second occasion of Amadour's attempted rape of Floride is made possible by Floride's mother, who invites him into her daughter's

³¹ Mary J. Baker, 'Rape, attempted rape and seduction in the *Heptaméron*', *Romance Quarterly*, XXXIX, (1992), 271-281.

room. Floride has disfigured her face in an attempt to quell Amadour's lust, but to no avail, as he demands his reward for his long, faithful (and unsolicited) service. Floride attempts to reason with him before calling for help. These scenarios mirror one another, creating a chiasmus: in his space, he is an invalid; in hers, it is she who is the invalid. In the first attack, she calls for help before attempting to reason with Amadour, in the second she tries reason before summoning aid. By having dialogue with her attacker, Floride is allowed speech in a way that the *muletière* and the Flemish Princess were not. However, on a social level and similar to the Princess, she is silenced by her public refusal to denounce him, as the knowledge of his devotion to her would cast suspicion more upon her than upon him.

Of the tales in the third category of seduction or attempted seduction, [I, 8] and [III, 23] are worthy of examination for the issue of responsibility introduced in them. Tale [V, 48] touches upon this issue briefly in commenting that 'le marié ne voulut laisser la danse, mais y estoit tant affectionné qu'il sembloit qu'il eut oublyé sa femme' (p. 316), implying that had the groom left the dance, his wife would not have been raped by the *Cordeliers*. However, the tale's greater purpose is to illustrate the immorality of the holymen who usurp the marital bed. In [III, 23] the husband is forced to accept responsibility for the tragic consequences of his sexual appetites, punished by death at the hands of his brother-in-law. By inviting the monk into his home and allowing him to dictate their means of intercourse, the husband makes it possible for the monk to invade his wife's space and usurp the marital bed.

It is crucial to our reading of this text as a reflection of social/ sexual *mores* that we understand that what the male protagonist or *devisant* in *L'Heptaméron* sees as seduction might equally be seen by the reader or the female *devisant* as rape. In [II, 14], Bonnavet, convinced that no woman could resist his advances if she were not already engaged elsewhere, discovers that his latest prey has, up until then, been faithful to her husband, but that she has a chaste relationship with a friend of his. After ingratiating himself with her *serviteur*, Bonnavet supplants his friend and does not reveal himself until after intercourse. The men of the company are of the opinion

that even the self-professed virtuous Woman wants intercourse and that if her virtue extends that far, she actively welcomes rape as a means of relieving her of the burden of decision. As Hircan remarks in (II, 14), 'si les femmes vouloient [...] estre si rigoureuses, ausquelles la douceur est tant seante, nous changerions aussy nos doulces supplications en finesses et forces' (p. 115). This misogynist myth means that the violated victim can rarely be seen as guiltless, even in instances of violent rape. It is significant that victims of rape in *L'Heptaméron* are often presented as particularly clever, virtuous or active. In this way, the rape can be seen as the ruthless masculine reinforcement of patriarchal values, subordinating the Woman to the level of vessel where any and every man may expect to take his pleasure as his due. The *serviteur* inevitably expects his gratification, even if he must take it by force to 'save the Woman's honour', a misogynist preconception noted in Chapter Two. The erroneous medical perception of the lubricious Woman, coupled with the ecclesiastical suppression of female sexuality, created the opinion that Woman was always ready for sex, but that her conscience would not allow her to indulge her desire. A man should therefore take by force what a woman wanted to give, in order to expunge any feelings of guilt she might have. As Amadour remarks to Floride in [I, 10] 'Par Dieu [...] le fruict de mon labeur ne me sera point osté par vos scrupules [...] je n'espargneray point ma force pour acquerir le bien qui, sans l'avoir, me la feroit perdre' (p. 78). It is ironic, of course, that each man expects his 'due' from some other man's wife and at the same time expects his wife to resist any improper advances. There can only be a finite number of married women in an aristocratic society, a society obsessed with procreation and marriage to sustain itself. If fidelity is of paramount importance to ensure the legitimacy of offspring and women are to gratify their *serviteurs*, who is to be chaste?

As has been shown in this chapter, it cannot be argued in any significant way that Marguerite de Navarre in *L'Heptaméron* creates or advocates equality of the sexes. This in itself is not surprising, given that the accepted literary techniques of the Renaissance created a medium where authors sought to prove the superiority of one

sex over the other. However, it has also been shown that Marguerite de Navarre does not subscribe to this school of literary practice, since, for the most part, the male *devisants* attempt to prove the vice of all women and the virtue of all men, where the female *devisants* seek only to force an admission from the men that the existence of virtue be possible in at least one woman. Furthermore, it has been seen that the women narrators use their tales to a didactic end, exhorting the Woman to moral superiority out of a feminocentric desire to expose the prevailing notion of Woman as erroneous and thus create a more positive view of women, based upon a realistic prescription for female participation in society. This is achieved through illustrating the accepted social and marital inferiority of the Woman, which is then undermined by the setting up of its binary opposite illustrating the possibility of shared social activity between the sexes, as indicated by the presence of the real Marguerite de Navarre between the pages of the *Heptaméron*. The ideal once again meets the real: little can be done to alter the social realism of Woman's inferiority, other than to expose it as unreasonably perpetuated, so women must be encouraged to aspire to the ideal of religious and moral superiority.

It cannot be said that a coherent image of the Woman prevails at the end of *L'Heptaméron*: this is indicative of the deliberate realism of this woman writer who rejects the notion of a universalised generalised Woman. Marguerite de Navarre has chosen to paint an accurate picture of social and sexual mores, to depict the prevailing 'antifeminist' attitudes in society through the mouths of the men of the company. It is further illustrative of her realism that not all of her male *devisants* are as virulently 'anti-feminist' as Saffredent, nor that all of her female *devisants* hold moral codes as strict as Oisille and Parlamente. This would be unrepresentative of society and *L'Heptaméron*, as has already been said, provides a microcosm of the larger world in the group of travellers stranded at the Abbey.

More important is whether Marguerite de Navarre can be said to advocate a code of conduct for the Woman through the pedagogic story-telling of the female *devisants*. This has also been examined in this chapter and it has been shown that

through their narratives, the women explore the possibility of perfect love as the Ideal, a Neo-platonic society where woman is appreciated for her beauty and perfection, free of the taint of carnality and closer to God. That this ideal is constantly undermined by the derision of the men, by the reactions of the company towards a *nouvelle* illustrating such a relationship and doubting its authenticity, indicates that the ideal cannot easily co-exist with the reality of society. Woman must then seek a code for existing in real society, assaulted by the pre-judgements and desires of men. The ultimate moral code for real women to practise in society can therefore be summarised into three main virtues:

- i) chastity, defended vigorously, even to the point of death;
- ii) fidelity to one's husband without reproach or remonstrance, with patience, forbearance and love;
- iii) love, of God above all else and of one's husband above all other mortal men.

In these prescriptions for female behaviour, based upon the knowledge that patriarchy places restrictions upon the potential for women to participate actively in society, Marguerite, like Christine, falls broadly into line with traditional conduct. Like Christine, Marguerite emphasises female potential for virtue, whether active or passive. She acknowledges the existence of evil women in the world, but refuses to accept the generalisation that all women are therefore evil, using the examples of wicked women as an exhortation to the avoidance of vice. As Natalie Zemon Davis states 'Marguerite treats men and women with symmetry, cutting through the topoi of insatiable female appetite and modesty. Both sexes can be chaste, resisting unwanted sexual overtures: both sexes initiate love affairs and deceive their mates'.³²

Like Christine, Marguerite does not advocate the equality of the sexes, but posits the capacity for virtue and activity beneficial to society as being present in both sexes through the use of example. This is achieved by inciting women to emulate the virtuous conduct depicted in the tales, and by proving through example the existence of good men and women. These good women exist within the narrative outside the

³² Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), p. 106.

tales themselves: Oisille can be seen to embrace the contemplative life, a woman who has found solace in God towards the end of her active life, and Parlamente might be seen to represent the ideal wife, who loves her husband faithfully and is tolerant of his infidelities.

In our next chapter, we will examine the use of the terms 'example' and 'authority' by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre. In Chapter Five, the style, rhetorical devices and subject matter of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* will be examined through the interpretative filter of modern theory. We will endeavour to ascertain whether or not the use of critical theory might afford this thesis deeper insights into these texts, prior to our summative Conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Concordances

After having examined the appropriation of authority and example by these women writers, it would be a valuable exercise at this point to study the ways in which the words 'example' and 'authority' are used in the texts under consideration. To this end, we have noted and tabulated the words 'example' and 'authority' in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, the *Livre des Trois Vertus* and the *Heptaméron*. These tables have been lemmatised and, as such, words like *exemplaire* and *auttorisee* are included for each text. We have also, for ease of reference, elected to provide only one table per page.

Christine de Pizan – *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*

<u>EXAMPLE</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
a l' <i>exemple</i> de patience p. 629	soit il de nulle <i>auttorité</i> p. 617
parolles de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 644	<i>l'auctorité</i> de l'auteur p. 624
Par assez d' <i>exemples</i> p. 655	moindre <i>auttorité</i> que les autres p. 626
je te donray <i>exemple</i> p. 666	dont luy vient tel <i>auttorité</i> p. 651
<i>Exemple</i> : si comme il est dit p. 674	de si petite <i>auttorité</i> p. 660
cy apres en <i>exemple</i> p. 676	<i>auttorité</i> du sexe femenin p. 673
preuve par <i>exemple</i> p. 721	pour son <i>auctorité</i> p. 732
ce donray assez <i>exemple</i> p. 735	pour <i>l'auttorité</i> de son savoir p. 744
par ces <i>exemples</i> p. 759	<i>l'auttorité</i> de ses enfans p. 776
par l' <i>exemple</i> que ont veu p. 762	preudesfemes de grant <i>auttorité</i> p. 816
monstrer par <i>exemple</i> p. 764	jamais telle <i>auttorité</i> p. 819
te donray encore <i>exemple</i> p. 768	riche et de grant <i>auttorité</i> p. 877
par vive rayson et <i>exemple</i> p. 778	donnent telle <i>auttorité</i> p. 892
leur donne bon <i>exemple</i> p. 805	de grant <i>auctorité</i> p. 896
petit <i>exemple</i> seroit a la fille p. 805	la fu <i>auttorisee</i> Gliselidis p. 909
<i>exemples</i> te pourroye dire p. 814	belle et de grant <i>auttorité</i> p. 979
t'en donray mains <i>exemples</i> p. 820	plus <i>auttorisees</i> qui y fussent p. 1018
donnant <i>exemples</i> p. 832	
trouvé <i>exemples</i> contraires p. 833	
dire <i>exemples</i> contre ceulx p. 847	
donne <i>exemple</i> d'aucuns p. 852	
deux <i>exemples</i> [...] nottables p. 863	
elle estoit <i>exemple</i> p. 879	
pour lait <i>exemple</i> p. 884	
assez d' <i>exemples</i> te trouveroye p. 884	
donne <i>exemple</i> de plusieurs p. 885	
par vray <i>exemple</i> p. 885	
a l' <i>exemple</i> de Lucesce p. 887	
donner <i>exemple</i> de femmes p. 888	
contredire par <i>exemples</i> p. 900	
de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 900	
prouver par <i>exemple</i> p. 929	
ses piteux <i>exemples</i> p. 951	
sur ce aucuns <i>exemples</i> p. 956	
je t'en donray <i>exemple</i> p. 959	
bon <i>exemple</i> a toute femme p. 978	
cause de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 1010	
ramentevoir telz <i>exemples</i> p. 1027	
par l' <i>exemple</i> de vostre Roïne p. 1032	

Christine de Pizan *Le Livre des Trois Vertus*

EXAMPLE	AUTHORITY
<p>a l'exemple de Dieu p. 8 <i>exemple</i> de toutes bonnes meurs p. 9 chose de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 31 l'<i>exemple</i> de monsieur p. 38 donne bon <i>exemple</i> p. 38 tire tant en <i>exemple</i> p. 38 le flair de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 42 vertueuses de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 45 les <i>exemples</i> ou de bien ou de mal p. 46 bonnes moralitéz ou <i>exemples</i> p. 50 prendre aucun mauvais <i>exemple</i> p. 61 elle sera <i>exemple</i> aux filles p. 61 je pourroye traire a <i>exemple</i> p. 62 donroit bon <i>exemple</i> a autrui p. 67 prendront les autres <i>exemple</i> p. 67 elles doivent estre <i>exemplaire</i> p. 73 met <i>exemple</i> de Titus p. 77 estre <i>exemplaire</i> de bien pp.88-9 enseignement et <i>exemple</i> non bien p. 92 lui dira de bons <i>exemples</i> p. 102 afin qu'elle soit l'<i>exemplaire</i> p. 111 prenez <i>exemple</i> p. 113 quel <i>exemple</i> p. 116 donna voirement bien <i>exemple</i> p. 137 comparee par <i>exemple</i> a p. 142 lesquelx <i>exemples</i> je laisse p. 148 elles seront de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 164 donne mauvais <i>exemple</i> a autrui p. 178 par l'<i>exemples</i> d'ycelles p. 197 toutes de bon <i>exemple</i> p. 199 <i>exemple</i> pour enseignement p. 202 prenez <i>exemple</i> a la benoite Marie p. 212 vertus en bons <i>exemples</i> pp. 225-6</p>	<p>plus <i>auctorisee</i> p. 12 renommee et <i>auctorisee</i> p. 12 en grandeur et <i>auctorité</i> p. 17 autant <i>auctorisee</i> ou honnoree p. 17 donné <i>auctorité</i> de le passer p. 17 poissance ne <i>auctorité</i> p. 20 <i>auctorité</i> de gouverner p. 48 maistresse de grant <i>auctorité</i> p. 49 <i>auctorisee</i> et crainte p. 61 la greigneur <i>auctorité</i> p. 67 qui aient <i>auctorité</i> p. 81 bien donner <i>auctorité</i> p. 81 donne <i>auctorité</i> de gouverner pp. 81-2 tu <i>auctorusoies</i> plus l'estat p. 222 dames et femmes d'<i>auctorité</i> p. 225</p>

Marguerite de Navarre *L'Heptaméron*

EXAMPLE	AUTHORITY
<p>je vous monstre icy pour <i>exemple</i> p. 27 par quelque <i>exemple</i> p. 27 leu et veu de beaulx <i>exemples</i> p. 37 vous proposer pour <i>exemple</i> p. 40 une <i>exemple</i> p. 42 cest <i>exemple</i> ne soit pas suffisant p. 53 croyez cest <i>exemple</i> p. 54 j'ay prouvé par <i>exemple</i> p. 54 les bons <i>exemples</i> que vous m'avez donnez p. 74 en prenant <i>exemple</i> de la vertu p. 83 pour cest <i>exemple</i> icy p. 83 sainctes parolles et bon <i>exemple</i> p. 99 vous m'avez donné <i>exemple</i> p. 123 la doctrine et l'<i>exemple</i> des aultres p. 138 l'<i>exemple</i> d'un aussy bon mari p. 174 ne fusse que l'<i>exemple</i> p. 187 par ceste <i>exemple</i> p. 200 seigneurs y prinssent <i>exemple</i> p. 207 prenez l'<i>exemple</i> qu'il vous plaira p. 207 montrer un <i>exemple</i> qui est très veritable p. 254 l'<i>exemple</i> qu'il a alleguée p. 260 un <i>exemple</i> qui doit servir p. 268 il prandra cest <i>exemple</i> qui voudra p. 268 vous monstrez par <i>exemple</i> p. 272 je vous en diray un <i>exemple</i> p. 272 cest <i>exemple</i> vous soit si profitable p. 277 cest <i>exemple</i> est suffisant p. 277 vous en avez tant oy d'<i>exemples</i> p. 285 y pvoient prendre <i>exemple</i> p. 285 à son <i>exemple</i> p. 294 mectre ung tel <i>exemple</i> p. 304 sçavez quelque <i>exemple</i> p. 311 icy mectre ung <i>exemple</i> p. 315 par faulte d'<i>exemple</i> p. 329 les aultres y prendront <i>exemples</i> p. 338 fortifié d'<i>exemple</i> p. 356 si vous en sçavez quelque <i>exemple</i> p. 365 servir aux femmes d'<i>exemple</i> p. 392 se proposant pour <i>exemple</i> p. 394 cofirmer de quelque <i>exemple</i> p. 395 vous debvez tirer <i>exemple</i> de cecy p. 418 avec quelques <i>exemples</i> p. 430 par infinité d'<i>exemples</i> p. 434</p>	<p>l'<i>auctorité</i> de commander p. 44 il donnoit tant d'<i>auctorité</i> en sa maison p. 90 ceulx qui sont en <i>auctorité</i> p. 95 pour l'<i>auctorité</i> où le mary estoit p. 125 plus d'<i>auctorité</i> et de puissance p. 125 user de son <i>auctorité</i> de visiteur p. 181 ignorante l'<i>auctorité</i> d'amour p. 196 tant d'<i>auctorité</i> et de privauté p. 175 menasser de l'<i>auctorité</i> et puissance p. 292 et de grande <i>auctorité</i> p. 296 de grande maison et et d'<i>auctorité</i> p. 298 plus d'<i>auctorité</i> et de malice pp. 315-6 moins d'<i>auctorité</i> p. 337 si petite <i>auctorité</i> p. 356 luy pleust l'<i>auctorizer</i> de faire p. 373 terres où j'ay <i>auctorité</i> p. 408</p>

These tables cannot be claimed to be totally without error, but the potential for small errors in our tabulation must be outweighed by the immediately obvious similarities between all three texts in their uses of the words 'example' and 'authority'; significantly, in each work, these women writers use 'example' more than twice as much as 'authority'. In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine uses the word 'authority' to refer to *auctoritas* and to personal power whereas, in the *Livre des Trois*

Vertus she uses the term only to denote power. There is also no level of manifest intertextuality in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, other than her introductory reference to the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. We would contend, therefore, that Christine establishes her writing credentials in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* through the appropriation of *auctoritas* from earlier authors and that she re-establishes her creative authority in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* through her reference to her, by now, well-known text. Additionally, the behavioural prescriptions of the *Livre des Trois Vertus* come directly from the mouths of the Virtues and therefore, by extension, from God. There is little need for manifest intertextuality when the text is presented as spoken by divine authority. Marguerite de Navarre too uses the term 'authority' to mean power. This is in the main because semantic developments had brought the term 'authority' to mean power but also because Marguerite had far less need to establish her authorial credentials because of her personal authority. In the *Heptaméron*, however, those who are described as having 'authority' have had it conferred upon them by a member of the nobility and are rarely presented in a flattering light. In each instance, the protagonists described as having authority which is not divinely ordained abuse their power, or are revealed as hypocrites and are thus unworthy of power. As France moves inexorably from feudal state to kingdom, Marguerite reinforces the power of the ruling family, her own. Thus, in all three texts, authority can be seen to mean power; the power of literary tradition, adopted by Christine to justify her writing; the personal power of Marguerite which justifies her writing. Authority is a powerful and dangerous tool; as Marguerite shows, not all who have power can use it effectively. These women empower themselves, through their literary and personal authority, to speak of and to women through the use of example.

The use of 'example' in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is divided equally between examples used to reject universalising generalisation, examples cited to provide an ideal to which women might wish to aspire, and examples used to support a positive assertion about women. Conversely, in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* and in the *Heptaméron*, 'example' is used not only to refute a generalisation, but it is also used to

refer to both good and bad examples; conduct to be avoided and conduct to be emulated. In this way, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre use 'example' both to reject universalising generalisation and to advocate a revised code of conduct for women, based upon the social reality of women's subordination. This may be seen more readily if we break down the above tables further yet, in order to examine the intended purpose or meaning of *example* and *authority* used within the texts.

Christine de Pizan *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*

<u>Example to refute negative assertion</u> p. 655, p. 666, p. 721, p. 764, p. 820, p. 832, p. 833, p. 847, p. 885, p. 888, p. 900, p. 956	<u>Example to support positive assertion</u> p. 674, p. 676, p. 735, p. 759, p. 762, p. 768, p. 814, p. 852, p. 863, p. 884, p. 929, p. 959
<u>Example to emulate</u> p. 629, p. 644, p. 778, p. 805, p. 879, p. 885, p. 887, p. 900, p. 978, p. 1010, p. 1027, p. 1032	<u>Example to avoid</u> p. 805, p. 951
<u>Literary authority (positive)</u>	<u>Literary authority (negative)</u> p. 617, p. 624, p. 660, p. 892,
<u>Personal authority (positive)</u> p. 673, p. 732, p. 744, p. 776, p. 816, p. 877, p. 909, p. 979, p. 1018	<u>Personal authority (negative)</u> p. 819, p. 896,
<u>Divine authority (positive)</u> p. 626, p. 651,	<u>Divine authority (negative)</u>

As noted above, the use of *example* is divided equally between examples used to refute a negative assertion, examples used to support a positive assertion and examples used for a didactic purpose. That there are only two examples to avoid is entirely understandable when we remember that Christine is striving to create a more moderate view of women: to introduce a significant number of examples unflattering to the female sex would be self-defeating. Even this use of examples to be avoided is didactic in its purpose: the first encourages a mother to behave wisely in front of her children, lest she be a bad *example* to them 'car se la mere estoit de folle vie, petit *exemple* seroit a la fille' (p. 805), where the second refers to the 'piteux *exemples*' of women who have perished from unwise or mis-placed love of a man. It should, however, be noted that the majority of those examples cited to support a positive assertion have arisen out of a negative assertion, where Christine questions one of the Virtues on the validity of a negative assertion and her interlocuter rejoins with a positive assertion. Literary *authority* is described negatively on four occasions: these refer respectively to Matheolus and Jean de Meung in an attempt to undermine the *auctoritas* of the misogynist writers, followed by two generalised criticisms of the

canonical opinion of Woman. In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, personal *authority* is described positively when it is used by powerful women who have reigned or governed in the absence of father or husband. It is used negatively only twice: to criticise women who would seek to have power over their husbands (p. 819), and to imply an abuse of power by those who condemned Seneca to death (p. 896).

Christine de Pizan *Le Livre des Trois Vertus*

<u>Example to refute negative assertion</u>	<u>Example to support positive assertion</u>
<u>Example to emulate</u> p. 8, p. 9, p.31, p.38, p.38, p. 38, p. 42, p. 45, p. 46, p. 50, p. 61, p. 61, p. 67, p. 67, p. 73, p. 77, pp.88-9, p. 111, p. 137, p. 164, p. 197, p. 202, p. 212, pp.225-6	<u>Example to avoid</u> p. 61, p. 92, p. 102, p. 113, p. 116, p. 142, p. 148, p. 178, p. 197, p. 199
<u>Literary Authority (positive)</u>	<u>Literary Authority (negative)</u>
<u>Personal Authority (positive)</u> p. 48, p. 49, p. 61, p. 81, p. 81, p. 225	<u>Personal Authority (negative)</u> p. 12, p. 12, p. 17, p. 17, p. 17, p. 20, p. 81
<u>Divine Authority (positive)</u> p. 67, p. 222	<u>Divine Authority (negative)</u>

We may reasonably infer from this that, as was discussed in Chapter Two, the *Livre des Trois Vertus* is primarily a didactic work; even where personal *authority* is used negatively, it is employed to warn against the dangers of pride and therefore by extension to advocate humble behaviour. Where personal *authority* is mentioned positively, it is employed to advocate the possibility of active female participation in society, authorised or having sufficient authority to act in her husband's absence. Given Christine's profound religious beliefs, it is unsurprising that Divine *authority* is only ever used positively.

In our division of the terms *example* and *authority* in *L'Heptaméron*, we have necessarily subdivided further, by separating the *devisants* use of these terms by gender. Further, we have attempted to categorise these terms according to the speaker's intended meaning: for example, Saffredent's assertion in [I, 3] 'Voilà, mes dames, une histoire que volontiers je vous monstre icy pour *exemple*, à fin que, quand vos mariz vous donnent des cornes de cheuvreux, vous leur en donnez de cerf' (p. 27). Saffredent is inciting the women of the audience to adultery, an action not condoned by the female *devisants* but actively supported by the men of the group. To this end,

this use of *example* has been listed both under examples to emulate (men) and examples to avoid (women).

Marguerite de Navarre *L'Heptaméron*

<u>Example to refute negative assertion</u>	
<u>Men</u> p. 53	<u>Women</u> p. 27, p. 54, p. 174, p. 356
<u>Example to support positive assertion</u>	
<u>Men</u> p. 54	<u>Women</u>
<u>Example to support negative assertion</u>	
<u>Men</u> p. 83, p. 254, p. 272, p. 272, p. 285, p. 304, p. 311, p. 365	<u>Women</u> p. 40, p. 315, p. 395
<u>Example to emulate</u>	
<u>Men</u> p. 27, p. 37, p. 138, p. 187, p. 207, p. 392	<u>Women</u> p. 74, p. 83, p. 99, p. 261, p. 261, p. 285, p. 294, p. 434
<u>Example to avoid</u>	
<u>Men</u> p. 200, p. 207, p. 338, p. 430	<u>Women</u> p. 27, p. 42, p. 123, p. 207, p. 260, p. 277, p. 277, p. 329, p. 418
<u>Personal authority</u>	
<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u> p. 44, p. 90, p. 95, p. 125, p. 125, p. 181, p. 275, p. 292, p. 296, p. 298, pp. 315-6, p. 337, p. 356p. 373, p. 408
<u>Divine authority</u>	
<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u> p. 196

As we discussed in Chapter Three, the use of *example* tends to be used by the female speakers to a didactic end, either by illustrating examples to emulate, or by warning of examples to avoid. It is also used predominantly by the women of the group to refute a negative assertion from one of the male *devisants*. The only exception to this is Dagoucin's use of *example* to refute Saffredent's assertion that people do not die of love (p. 53) and can be seen as an attempt to engage the sympathy of the women in the group by allying himself to the tale of a sensitive and chaste *serviteur*. As is noted above, all uses of personal *authority* should rather be seen as the abuse of personal authority conferred upon the protagonist by a member of the nobility. The only mention of Divine *authority* in [III, 24] refers explicitly to the power of love. In its use within the *nouvelle*, it is not immediately apparent that Divine authority is what the speaker intends, but it is the power of Elisor's love for the Queen that forces him into exile at her request and, ultimately, into the love of God.

We have seen in our previous chapters that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre have adopted and adapted the rhetorical devices of example and authority. Closer linguistic analysis has revealed that they use these devices in different ways and to different ends. It is evident that the terms *example* and *authority* exist within these three texts both positively and negatively, as didactic tools and as literary weapons in the struggle to create a more reasoned view of women. These tools are adopted to appropriate literary authority and adapted to undermine misogynist universalisation, whilst remaining broadly within the bounds of contemporary canonical prescriptions for female behaviour. In our next chapter, we will move our critical discussion from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the twentieth century and examine the potential in these texts for theoretical and critical comment.

CHAPTER FIVE

New Historicist and Gendered Approaches

'Is a pen a metaphorical penis?'
(Sandra M. Gilbert & Susan Gubar)

This thesis has thus far, with the exception of the Introduction, made use of the first person plural, but for the purposes of this chapter, where appropriate, I shall adopt first person singular. My reasons are these: hitherto in this thesis the information discussed has, to a certain extent, already been available in the public domain; where interpretation was offered and conjecture made, the use of first person plural was employed to draw the reader into a consensual dialogue, based upon the acceptance of information already established by more than one person, including me. In this chapter, however, I have adopted first person singular because, given the multiplicity of theoretical possibilities for this examination, and the particular scholastic bias and standpoint from which I approach this material, the theoretical interpretations offered in this chapter are mine alone. No school of thought or theory is monolithic and, as such, not every medievalist, *seizièmiste*, or feminist can be expected to share precisely the same opinions. This chapter will focus upon only the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron*, as I believe that the structural similarities and the use of concrete example rather than abstract admonition within these texts will lend themselves more easily to this sort of critical approach.

It might at first appear strange to the reader of this thesis that the use of theory has hitherto been avoided in this examination of example and authority. This is not because I wish to reject the analytical potential of modern theory, but rather because, as was discussed in the Introduction, the goal of this thesis is to examine and validate the writings of these two women authors in an appropriate socio-historical context. It has been my purpose, therefore, to study the writings of these women, not because they were lonely female voices, worthy of examination on the sole basis of their exceptional status, but because of their artistry and erudition at a time when, in the absence of established educational programmes for women, the only education these

women would have received would necessarily have been male-oriented. We have established in the preceding chapters the weight of misogynist tradition, the development of notions of sex-identity and the existence of rhetorical *topoi* prevalent in the writings of this period, writings penned in the vast majority of cases by men. In the patriarchal world of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, in order to be read, the woman writer had necessarily to adopt the accepted modes of traditionally masculine discourse. It is in this that we find a level of the fundamental problematic of this thesis which lends itself well to the use of gender theory: we must examine whether Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre, writing as women, had to write like/ as men in order to speak as women on the subject of women. Until now, this examination has been deliberately placed in an appropriate socio-historic context, in order to discuss the rhetorical stratagems of these women writers as situated expressly within the (male) literary tradition. However, the nature of the texts written by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre, the fact that they 'deliberately engage in the contemporary polemic about the status of women', that they discuss the history of women's experiences and attempt to revise an erroneous notion of a universalised Woman absolutely validates the possibility for the modern scholar to adopt 'engendered reading strategies', which make use of interdisciplinary theories.¹ As Gerda Lerner notes, 'no single methodology and conceptual framework can fit the complexities of the historical experience of all women'² and it should not be forgotten that this study is grounded in the *mores* of another age. There are therefore several problematic areas to be addressed in this chapter, which I propose to lay out as clearly as possible, inter-related though they are. At the most basic level, I am a woman, examining women writers as they address the role of women in society. This will therefore necessitate the use of gender theory and criticism. These women wrote *circa* 400-600 years ago; as such this thesis must take historical background

¹ Louise M. Haywood, 'Female Voices in Spanish Sentimental Romances', *Journal of Institute of Romance Studies*, 4 (1996), 17-35 (p. 33).

² Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective', in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. by Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 357-67 (p. 365).

into account, validating the possibility for a new historicist approach. The texts written by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre use, as has already been established, rhetorical devices appropriated from the canon; this will therefore be addressed by means of close textual and linguistic analysis, involving appropriate use of relevant linguistic theory.

The second half of this century has witnessed the birth and development of a phenomenal number of critical theories designed to give the reader greater insight into a given text; its structure, meaning, models, and messages. Contemporary theory pervades academic life as a tool of analysis, but the scholar of literature written centuries before even the emergence of psychoanalysis must consider carefully to what end s/he will make use of critical theory. Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman note that

Many medievalists have found contemporary theory a strange and threatening field, and medieval studies have, for the most part, lagged behind other disciplines in recognizing the importance of much critical thought. At the same time, however, many proponents of contemporary critical theory have been unwilling to acknowledge that the study of the Middle Ages can advance their own work.³

Should it therefore be concluded that the study of early literature is incompatible with the use of theory? I would contend that this is not so, but that whilst the use of theory can be invaluable in providing critical questions through which to filter information, it should not result in the anachronistic application of late twentieth-century cultural and literary agenda upon an earlier text. As Finke and Shichtman comment, 'good criticism discovers latent meaning; bad criticism imposes it'.⁴ I will endeavour, therefore, to practice good criticism and, just as I have shown Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre adopting authority from varied sources, so shall I not restrict myself to the use of a single school of theoretical thought. My approach will therefore

³ *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. by Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1987), foreword, (p. viii).

⁴ Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, 'Critical Theory and the Study of the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, pp.1-11 (p. 3).

be necessarily heuristic, selectively embracing theoretical constructs which I feel can illuminate aspects of the texts under examination, and rejecting those theories I feel can only serve to impose alien values or agenda upon the earlier writings I have elected to study.

If it is a primary concern of this thesis as a whole and of this chapter particularly that critical theory should not be imposed anachronistically, one might be tempted to question the validity of a critical/ theoretical approach per se. Firstly, a critical approach is validated by new historicist Jerome J. McGann, who stated that 'all inherited works of literature have it in their power to force a critical engagement with any present form of thought'.⁵ Secondly, I should like to suggest here a possible solution for the scholar of fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth-century texts who suffers the anxiety of anachronism, historical inversion or, more accurately, viewing critical theories as the modern development of earlier philosophies and literary traditions. For example, the use of Cixous' theory of bi-polarity becomes far more accessible if one chooses to see it as having arisen out of the Pythagorean table of opposites and the Hippocratic/ Galenic notion of the four humours, ideas which predate the literature under examination. Similarly, whilst the imposition of Freudian subconscious action onto characters/ figures inscribed more than 300 years before the advent of psychoanalysis might be anachronistic, it is not unreasonable to find elements of the Oedipal myth in these characters/ figures, inscribed over a millennium after the supposed existence of Oedipus and Jocasta. Furthermore, whilst it might seem inappropriate to attribute penis-envy as a motivational impulse to Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre, it is not unacceptable to find phallic imagery in pre-Freudian literature: just as the naked sword was banned from the seventeenth-century stage, so the swan's neck in the *lais* of Marie de France was recognised as a sexual symbol or signifier of the male reproductive organ. I would contend now and will examine in more detail later that it is not really possible to attribute the desire for a penis to women at a time when women's genitalia were still characterised according to

⁵ Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 14.

the Aristotelian model of composition; women had a penis, it was simply inverted internally. In the field of linguistics, might not the term 'intertextuality' be seen as the historical successor of the medieval tradition of appropriating *auctoritas* from earlier works, and the notion of turn-taking as an interactional control feature be viewed as having evolved out of medieval and Renaissance dialogue polemics? I would contend that almost all theoretical and critical thought can be seen to find its roots in an earlier period, something I will discuss in more detail throughout this chapter, and it is this historicity which permits a theoretical approach to this material. As Terry Eagleton notes, rhetoric, the study of which forms part of this thesis, 'was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the eighteenth century'.⁶ The use of theory in a thesis such as this becomes entirely admissible, provided that there exists in the texts sufficient evidence to support theoretical interpretation, not imposition. As Eagleton states 'What you choose and reject theoretically [...] depends upon what you are practically trying to do' (p. 211).

I will begin, therefore, at the most basic level; that of biological sex-difference and anthropological constructs of sex-identity. Thereafter, the examination will move from the abstract to the concrete and examine sex-identity as a cultural construct within a historically given period, which will involve the general use of gender and historical theory. This will lead naturally into an examination of the engendering of the writing act and the prerequisites necessary for writing. Thereafter, I will turn to examine the self-inscription of these women writers within the texts as a gendered act, making use of autobiographical theory to discuss the practice of self-inscription and authorisation. At the level of textual examination, I will consider whether the use of authority by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre might be seen as a level of linguistic intertextuality, and discuss the possibilities and problems inherent in a structuralist, deconstructionalist, or post-structuralist analysis of the texts. Given that there are more than three hundred examples of women cited in the texts under examination and that, as we have discussed in the preceding chapters, these examples

⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 205.

were drawn from various sources and traditions, it would be virtually impossible to attempt; i) an examination of every example in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* and, ii) a discussion of the women depicted by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre with reference to only one single theory of gender or school of critical thought. I will therefore restrict my analyses to selected examples, adopting a heuristic rather than synecdochical approach.

At its most basic level, this thesis examines the narrative representation of women by women writers. Having begun by examining in Chapter One what exactly was understood by the term Woman in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, it would be well to begin here by discussing the insights contemporary scholarly activity can offer us into the notion of Woman, beginning at the most basic, biological level with anthropological theories of gender.

Fundamentally, men and women are biologically different, a difference necessary for species continuation, but as Henrietta L. Moore states, 'The inevitable fact of biological difference between the sexes tells us nothing about the general social significance of that difference'.⁷ Carol P. MacCormack comments that

Whereas most basic human needs must be met or the *individual* will die, and they can be satisfied individually, procreative sex is not necessary to maintain the life of individuals but of *societies*, and that need cannot be met individually but requires paired opposites: male and female. Sexuality is natural but becomes cultural with incest prohibitions and rules of marriage exogamy.⁸

Claude Lévi-Strauss postulated that the incest taboo prohibiting consanguineous marriage or sexual relations resulted in women becoming goods of exchange, although Gerda Lerner claims that women were not what was exchanged, but female sexuality and reproductive capacity.⁹ Women's physical reproductive function, Sherry

⁷ Henrietta L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 7.

⁸ Carol P. MacCormack, 'Nature, Culture, and Gender: A Critique', in *Nature, Culture, and Gender*, ed. by Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1-24 (pp.1-2).

⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, ed. by Rodney Needham, trans. by James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 32; Gerda Lerner *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 213.

B. Ortner¹⁰ states, 'seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, "artificially" through the medium of technology and symbols', equating women with nature and men with culture. Of this woman/nature man/culture opposition, Ortner comments that 'Since it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it "natural" to subordinate, not to say oppress, them' (p. 73). It is possible, therefore, to draw a corollary between the prevailing western notion of Woman examined in Chapter One and this anthropological view of sex-difference: in the former, Woman is 'naturally' inferior because of her deformed physicality; in the latter, Woman's natural function of childbearing places her closer to nature and therefore subordinate to male culture. However, Ortner goes on to say that, in attempting to 'assert his creativity externally', man 'creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables – human beings' (p. 75). We must reject this element of Ortner's theory with reference to the women presented in the texts under examination and the historical periods during which they were written: as has already been noted in the preceding chapters, there is almost constant reference to the patronymic in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and, although in the *Heptaméron* few women are referred to by name, almost all are described with reference to a male relative. This emphasis upon dynastic lineage implicitly places women as producers within a lasting and therefore 'cultural' structure. Male preoccupation with ensuring their succession, manifested in strict prescription for female behaviour and obsessive fear of cuckoldry, must also be seen to denote the importance of childbearing (and therefore women) within the feudal system, where families must reproduce to survive and enhance their dynastic reputations. MacCormack states that 'the "myth" of nature [...] relies on a social consensus for meaning. Neither the concept of nature nor that of culture is "given" and they cannot be free from the biases of the culture in which the

¹⁰ Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?', in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 67-87 (p. 75).

concepts were constructed' (p. 6). The women presented by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre exist within feudal culture as producers and socialisers of the next generation, perpetuating the culturally constructed feudal society. It has been shown that both women writers deliberately and specifically acknowledge the notion of a universalised Woman, by her 'nature' evil and wanton. However, it has also been stressed that both Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre reject this notion of Woman and emphasise the possibility for useful and active female participation in society, or 'culture'. In this way, therefore, it is possible to see these women writers, and the women represented in their texts, as occupying the role of intermediary that Ortner suggests may be possible for women 'performing some sort of synthesizing or converting function between nature and culture' (p. 84). Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre mediate between the universalised view of 'natural' Woman and male-oriented 'culture' by representing in their narratives women capable of positive action, both in exercising their 'natural' function of childbearing, and in their ability to assume the masculine role in society.

I would contend from the above examination that it is not feasible to attempt to divorce theories of sex-identity from the socio-historic background in which this study places itself precisely because such theories are inextricably linked with the societies they help to create. Let us therefore turn to a new historicist approach to the material because, as Pauline M. Smith commented 'Perspective is not a substitute for appreciation but a necessary prelude to it'¹¹ and Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards too argue that 'literary material can legitimately be understood in terms of its wider social and moral context', and that art is most accurately represented as 'the product of a particular cultural milieu'.¹²

Finke and Shichtman state that 'contemporary readers never experience medieval texts directly, unambiguously, or ahistorically. Their reading is always mediated in highly complex ways by the scholarly activities that make these texts

¹¹ Pauline M. Smith, *Clement Marot: Poet of the French Renaissance* (London: University of Athlone Press, 1970), p. 1.

¹² *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), foreword.

accessible', what Beecher terms 'the built-in bias of the historian of ideas'.¹³ All new historicist approaches take as their foundation a knowledge of the historical period in question, a foundation established in the preceding three chapters of this thesis but, as Beecher comments, to read a story 'in search of its references to contemporary values can become merely a form of literary archaeology, though to ignore the bases for events in received ideas of the age is to misread in an equally perilous fashion' (p. 77). This is particularly perilous if one tries to divorce the issue of gender from new historicism because, as almost every feminist scholar/ critic/ historian notes, expressed succinctly by Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, 'History has been a record of male experience, written by men from a male perspective'.¹⁴ Should one infer from this comment then that the validity of this thesis is undermined because it discusses the situation of women placed within male history? As was discussed in the Introduction, given the paucity of extant evidence in the field of women's history for this period, it would be impossible to conduct an examination such as this one without recourse to such historical data as is available, regardless of the gender of the author; as Joan Kelly states

The activity, power and cultural evaluation of women simply cannot be assessed except in relational terms: by comparison and contrast with the activity, power and cultural evaluation of men, and in relation to the institutions and social developments that shape the sexual order.¹⁵

noted also by Greene and Kahn when they wrote

Women present a special case to the historian: neither class nor caste nor minority, they are more closely allied to the men in their lives than they are to women of other classes and races, and so are

¹³ Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, 'Critical Theory and the Study of the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, 1-11 (p. 1); Donald A. Beecher, 'Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron and the Received Idea: The Problematics of Lovesickness', in *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. by Régine Reynolds-Cornell, 71-8 (p. 74).

¹⁴ *Making A Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. by Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 12.

¹⁵ Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 9.

more closely integrated with the dominant culture than is any other subordinate group. (p. 14)

The field of women's history has developed enormously during the latter part of this century, arising out of the feminist movement, a process described thus by Jane Marcus as 'storming the toolshed', where she contends that feminist critics were 'all forced to become historians and biographers and to train [themselves] in those disciplines'.¹⁶ Lerner¹⁷ states that 'men have defined their experience as history and left women out'. Therefore, the fundamental task of women's history as Kelly defines it is to 'restore women to history and to restore our history to women' (p.1). This has taken many forms, including the search for data, the publication of previously unknown works, diaries and letters, all of which has contributed to a problematising of history: by recognising history as having been patriarchally constructed, it becomes possible to deconstruct this patriarchal institution and insert the 'lost' women of history but, because the task of rediscovery has inevitably meant the dissemination of written materials, it becomes extremely difficult to separate women's history from feminist literary theory and criticism. Indeed, it can be argued that the two are concomitant. Sydney Janet Kaplan postulates that for some women, feminist criticism 'originated in a recognition of [their] love for women writers', where for others their awakening 'was hastened by their urge to reveal the diverse ways women have been oppressed, misinterpreted and trivialized by the dominant patriarchal tradition'.¹⁸ Kaplan contends that, whatever the motivational impetus of the individual, feminist criticism then subdivides variously: into 'revisionary criticism of the canon, the study of neglected or lost women writers and the articulation of a distinctive female literary tradition' (p. 37). Joan Kelly argues that a 'compensatory' history of only 'exceptional' women is both unacceptable and unsatisfactory (p. 2) and, indeed, this thesis would be unacceptable if it examined the social history of all women by basing itself upon the

¹⁶ Jane Marcus, 'Storming The Toolshed', *excerpt in Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 138-53 (p. 139).

¹⁷ Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective', in *Liberating Women's History*, p. 365.

¹⁸ Sydney Janet Kaplan, 'Varieties of Feminist Criticism', in *Making a Difference*, 37-58 (p. 37).

study of only two exceptional women. This thesis, however, does not take as its subject the social history of women; this thesis is a literary study conducted from the perspective of an historian of ideas, grounded in an appropriate socio-historic background examining the representation of women in the literature of two exceptionally educated women writers. The possibilities for women's education were discussed in Chapter One, but a brief recapitulation here is necessary to establish the gendered nature of education. Joan Ferrante¹⁹ in 1980 bemoaned the fact that

we do not have a comprehensive study of the education available to women [in the middle ages]; we must piece together allusions in letters and lives and romances with passages from monastic rules and supplement them with the writings of women whose work is extant, in order to deduce what they must have been taught and where. (p. 9)

Nearly twenty years later, more pieces of the historical jigsaw have been put into place, particularly through the increasing number of 'sourcebooks' of women's writings published recently, but Ferrante's comprehensive study is still lacking. Enough is known, as was discussed in Chapter One to assert, along with Ferrante that 'In many instances, a woman's education did not go beyond reading the Psalter and signing her name, but even at that it was more than most laymen could do' (p. 10). Lerner states that 'Historically, education has served a utilitarian purpose by training persons in the specific skills needed by a given society',²⁰ in this case enough reading to follow the Mass and sufficient skill in arithmetic to manage the household accounts. Additionally, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries universities began to flourish, bringing about an increased level of institutionalisation in higher education for young men whose ambitions lay outwith the priesthood. She goes on to state that

In general, education becomes institutionalized when elites – military, religious or political – need to assure their position in power by means of training a group to serve and perpetuate their

¹⁹ Joan M. Ferrante, 'The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy', in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. by Patricia H. Labalme (New York & London: New York University Press, 1980), 9-42.

²⁰ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: from the Middle Ages to Eighteen seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 22.

interests [...] since women were excluded from military, religious and political elites, they were considered to have little need for formalized learning [...] Education was a class privilege for both sexes and served kin and state interests. It is not surprising therefore to find that almost all the known educated women from Antiquity to the 16th century AD. were members of the nobility. (p. 23)

Christine de Pizan was not necessarily exceptional in that she had been educated as a child. Her father, a professional member of the upper classes, would have had a vested interest in producing a suitably educated daughter to act as stand-in for her future husband. However, she is exceptional for following a regimen of self-education after the death of her husband upon which she became head of the household. Marguerite de Navarre, as a member of the royal family and later as sister of the King, was educated in all aspects of the noble curriculum in order to be an appropriate stand-in for husband or brother. In both instances, education provided the means for each woman author under examination here to assume the masculine role. As Kathleen Casey

comments

If feudal society often derogated from its own rules where family interest was at stake, so that some women of feudal rank exercised in fact powers that were denied them in law, it was because most of them, like their male relatives, could be trusted not to alter conventional political objectives [...] For the most part, all those in control of resources, whatever their sex, thought principally in terms of the family.²¹

Both women, Marguerite a member of the royal family, Christine dependent upon the ruling classes, internalised the masculine role furnished for them by their education in order to act for their families. Patricia Labalme states that during this period '[a] woman who excelled intellectually disregarded the boundaries of her sex', going further to state that such a woman 'became an intellectual transvestite' by drawing attention to Jean Gerson's description of Christine as *virilis femina*.²² If we accept that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre, by means of the essentially masculine

²¹ Kathleen Casey, 'The Cheshire Cat: Reconstructing the Experience of Medieval Women', in *Liberating Women's History*, 224-49 (p. 234).

²² *Beyond Their Sex*, Introduction, 1-8 (p. 5).

education which equipped them to write, internalised and appropriated the masculine role, it is only one step further to ask with Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar 'Is a pen a metaphorical penis?'²³ I do not wish to engage yet with Irwin's notion of the writing act as 'creative onanism', noted by Gilbert and Gubar (p. 8), but will turn first to an examination of the necessary prerequisites for women's writing.

Shoshana Felman asks 'Is it enough to be a woman in order to *speak as a woman*? Is "speaking the woman" a fact determined by some biological *condition* or by a strategic, theoretical position, by anatomy or by culture?'²⁴ I propose to begin by examining the cultural constraints upon the woman who chose to write during this period, prior to extrapolating the gendered nature of this writing. Natalie Zemon Davis, in her examination of women as historical writers wrote

Let us begin by asking what is needed for a person to write history. And I would say that a person, or a learned woman [...] needs first of all some access to materials about her subject, written, printed, or oral; and she needs enough public life [...] to observe intrigue, conflict, and debate [...] Second, the historian needs access to the genres of historical writing, to the rules for ordering and expressing historical material [...] some familiarity with the accepted modes of historical discourse [...] third, and especially important, she needs a sense of connection, through some activity or deep concern of her own, with the areas of public life then considered suitable for [...] writing [...] And furthermore she wants to have an audience who will take seriously her publications on these topics.²⁵

Although Davis' article discusses women as historical writers, the criteria in the above quotation remain equally valid if the words 'feminist/ anti-feminist' are substituted for 'history' and 'historical' and all criteria are inextricably linked to the privileged position of Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre in society and their assumption of the masculine role after their essentially masculine education. Both women had access to materials for study and a social position suited to public interaction. Both women had access to genres of writing, were trained in patterns of

²³ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 1.

²⁴ Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy', *excerpt in Feminisms*, 6-19 (p. 8).

²⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820', in *Beyond Their Sex*, 153-82 (pp. 154-5).

technique, were familiar with accepted modes of discourse and, as women, both felt a sense of connection with the *querelle des femmes*. Christine's reputation as a writer was established in court circles through her poetry and reinforced by her commission to write the biography of Charles V; Marguerite as the King's sister was in a privileged position where courtiers would read her writings. Christine's status as widow and the fact of her having assumed the masculine role as head of the household gave her the 'public life' necessary to Davis, whereas Marguerite acted as ambassador during the imprisonment of François Ier, successfully appropriating the male-dominated field of politics to negotiate her brother's release. One might well read Davis' 'accepted modes of [...] discourse' as 'patriarchal modes of discourse'; in the absence of a coherent female tradition of writing, other than in poetry or mysticism, the modes of discourse with which Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre were familiar were male-oriented and male-dominated. Thus, although the social status of both women favoured a reading audience, to be taken seriously necessitated the use of 'serious', and by extension, masculine discursive practices. Did these women therefore write as/ like women or as/ like men?

Lynne Huffer finds in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* a 'textual tension [which] appears through a series of oppositions which could be described as a conflict between the masculine and the feminine'.²⁶ She states that 'the text, because it generates these tensions, becomes a model of textual and sexual alienation' (p. 62). Huffer also contends that the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is characterised by 'a denial or flight away from the body' and that 'Christine's femininity is no more than "clothing"; the certainty of her identity is masculine, like that of the fool' (p. 63). For this last statement, Huffer has drawn upon Reason's speech to Christine in [4].²⁷ I would argue that Huffer's conclusion here is flawed because she has deliberately taken Dame Reason's speech out of context for the purposes of her own argument. To

²⁶ Lynne Huffer, 'Christine de Pizan: Speaking Like A Woman/ Speaking Like A Man', in *New Images of Medieval Women: Essays Toward a Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 61-72 (pp. 61-2).

²⁷ Reason states 'Tu ressembles le fol dont la truffe parle, qui en dormant au moulin, fu revestu de la robe d'une femme, et au resveiller, pource que ceulx qui le mouquoyent luy tesmoignoient que femme estoit, crut myeux leurs faulx diz que la certaineté de son estre' [4].

postulate that the body is denied in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is to deny Christine's complaint that 'en corps féminin m'ot fait Dieux estre au monde' [3], a complaint which directly precedes the entry of the three Virtues and the mention of the fool. I would contend that this comment grounds Christine's textual identity firmly within a female physicality. I would argue also that the story of the fool is more accurately seen as an allusion to the universality of canonical opinion, a reiteration of the assertion that 'tous traittiez philosophes [...] parlent par une meismes bouche' [1]. The validation of maternity, the existence of rape and the emphasis upon virginity and chastity in the text can in no way be seen to deny the female body, rather it emphasises female physicality, the necessity of women's reproductive capacity and the female body as object of desire. Sublimation of the body is indeed found in Christine's many virgin *exempla* but, as was discussed in Chapter Two, virginity in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* is more a tool for women to free themselves from the constraints of patriarchal marriage. The 'Christine' of the text is therefore undeniably female, speaking as a woman about women. The autobiographical nature of this self-inscription will, as I have already mentioned, be discussed later in this chapter. For the moment, however, it would be appropriate to examine the process of naming as part of this examination of the engendering of authorship. Huffer writes that

Modern psychoanalysis tells us that to name means, in Lacanian terms, to inscribe oneself in the symbolic order [...] When we name ourselves, we designate ourselves through the Name-of-the-Father; we are forever dominated [...] by the place of the law. In the case of the three [Virtues], their names link them to a patriarchal heritage which valorizes reason and logocentrism. (p. 65)

I would contend that the three Virtues are more than *linked* to patriarchy, they are explicitly defined as daughters of the ultimate patriarch, God and, through her writing, Christine herself is linked to the patriarchal heritage of literary tradition. Huffer comments that 'Christine places herself within a lineage of masculine authorities, auctoritates who are specifically designated by their proper name. But at times Christine subverts this traditional topos: she forgets the name. [...] This nominal

amnesia is subversive' (pp. 65-6). Here again I would wish to disagree with Huffer: whilst I do not deny the subversive techniques employed by Christine de Pizan, a subject discussed in considerable depth in Chapter Two, I would contend that Huffer's 'just like the man -- I cannot remember which one' (tout ainsi que a fait ne sçay quel homme [21]) is more appropriately seen as further evidence of the universality of the canon within which Christine must work if she hopes to have, as Davis suggested, an audience who will take her works seriously. 'Christine' as found in the text is female and speaks *as* a woman, but does Christine the author speak *as* a woman, writing *like* or *as* a man? Huffer notes that the 'masculine lineage of which Christine is a part includes a large number of men who wrote in Latin' (p. 67) and thus designates Christine's choice to write in the vernacular as a 'decision to write using the language of birth, the maternal language or mother tongue' (p. 68). Describing this decision as 'important' because it rejects Latin as the 'paternal language', Huffer notes (as we did in Chapter Two) that Christine's style is Latinate, concluding that 'The maternal language, the mother tongue, the female heritage, is in constant tension with the Latinate style, the masculine translatio' (p. 69). Going further, Huffer postulates that Christine's 'I' is therefore twice alienated; firstly because it is created through the discourse of another and secondly because that discourse is masculine. Huffer's exegetic interpretation has much to offer in terms of its ideas but, to my mind, too often ignores an appropriate socio-historic context. For example, Christine's use of allegory is casually dismissed as 'a conventional medieval form' (p. 69) and later, when she states 'Ironically, this textual alienation is Christine's source of power as a writer and a sign of her own auctoritas' (p. 70), she makes no mention of the medieval valorisation of tradition. There is nothing inherently wrong with the statement that 'if woman wishes to speak, if she chooses to write [...] she must adopt a masculine discourse' (p. 70), but to characterise such a discourse as that of the 'phallic all' (p. 70) is to accept that Christine de Pizan defines women as lacking, where I would contend that this thesis has illustrated the emphasis in Christine's writing upon the potential equality of human beings. It is one thing to accept that Christine de Pizan appropriates

masculine discourse, but it is quite another to conclude, as Huffer appears to, that this is indicative of some sort of deficiency, the last resort of a woman who 'wants to exist for man' (p. 70), rather than as the positive affirmation of female ability to enter the male domain and effectively appropriate one of the single most influential tools of patriarchy. To describe Christine's use of man's language exclusively in terms of the Lacanian Name-of-the-Father, implying woman's silence, is to deny Christine's purpose in writing. Annette Kolodny notes the 'impossibility of grounding a reading in the imputation of authorial intention because the further removed the author is from us, so too must be her or his systems of knowledge and belief [...] inescapably, the only appropriate authority is unavailable: deceased'.²⁸ Ultimately, whilst it would be anachronistic to impose intent upon Christine de Pizan, given the number of texts in which she actively engages in the debate upon the situation of women, the fact that all criticism of her work has inferred from her writings a desire to defend women from the attacks of misogynist canonical tradition, and the fact that Dame Reason describes Christine's task in building the city as defensive [7], it is possible to say with certainty that Christine's aim was to defend women. It is my own inference, as illustrated in Chapter Two, that hers was a moderate process, attempting to redress the balance of the sexes, based upon a rejection of universalising generalisation. Any attempt so to do, however, relies upon the effective dissemination of the ideas and arguments contained in a text: in short, the text must be read. Huffer notes, as did we in Chapter One, that 'Latin was, at the time that Christine wrote, taught and learned almost exclusively by men' (p. 68). In this light, might not Christine's decision to write in the vernacular be more accurately seen, not in terms of Derridian pre-Oedipal language of the mother, but rather as a conscious attempt to make her work more widely available to those readers not trained in Latin: women? An attempt to revise the erroneous notion of a universalised Woman depends upon both sexes acknowledging that this view is erroneous. This requires the reading participation, not of exclusively clerical thinkers whose views were firmly grounded in the patristic tradition, but also of real

²⁸ Annette Kolodny, 'Dancing Through The Minefield', *excerpt in Feminisms*, 97-116 (p. 104).

men and women living in real society for, as was examined in Chapter Two, Christine's revised behavioural guidelines are based upon active female participation in society. By writing *like* a man, Christine invites the collusion of her male readers; by speaking as a woman, she offers the authority of personal experience to her female readers. The use of the vernacular and the dialogic structure of Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames* facilitates comprehension for readers of both sexes (notwithstanding the Latinate syntax) and, although the application of reader reception theory would be inappropriate in terms of her fifteenth-century audience, it would not be unreasonable to hypothesise that: by adopting *auctoritas* from the canon, Christine sought to engage her male readers with the rhetoric and literary historicity of her text; by inscribing herself in the text, she sought to create a connective relationship between her women readers and her experience as a woman. By writing *like* a man but speaking *as* a woman, Christine de Pizan rejects the canonical orthodoxy of the universalised Woman: she exposes the monolithic view of Woman as flawed, giving proof to her male readers that virtuous women can exist, and have existed, whilst at the same time providing her female readers with models of behaviour to which they might aspire. By employing both male and female discourse in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine deliberately recreates the polar division of the sexes linguistically: if traditional masculine rhetoric was the accepted (and therefore positive) mode of discourse, then female discourse must necessarily be the negative mode. However, between the two poles of discourse lies the space for a neutered language: perhaps what is written in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* might be seen, not simply as the adoption and adaptation of traditionally male tropes and *topoi*, not only as an early expression of female discourse, not even as expressing the tension between masculine and feminine, but as an inchoate attempt at 'human' language, which privileges neither sex.

Before I discuss whether Marguerite de Navarre writes and speaks as a man or a woman, it would be well to note that not all of the criteria used in my discussion of Christine de Pizan can be employed here. Because of the evolving nature of literary

tradition, the fact that the *Heptaméron* was written in the vernacular is not a significant factor in this discussion; French had, by the sixteenth century become much more accepted as the language of literature. Nor is the appropriation of *auctoritas* as fundamental an issue to written composition in the Renaissance as it was to the Medieval tradition. Certain rhetorical tropes remained; courtly love still held sway, now under the influence of Neoplatonism; the *querelle des femmes* continued unabated and the universalised notion of Woman still prevailed, but it would be unreasonable not to acknowledge that, as was noted in Chapter One, just as social and political *mores* change, so do literary tastes and conventions.

Returning now to the question of the gendered nature of Marguerite de Navarre in the *Heptaméron*, Carla Freccero states that

Marguerite writes. She writes in a masculine secular tradition whose rhetoric is that of seduction and which contains no space for the female writer. Her context as a woman with a prominent and highly integrated role in society, that of wife, queen and sister to the King of France, determines the impossibility of her remaining within such a tradition [...] Through the rhetoric of moral and spiritual transcendence [...] she creates a space in which a feminine discourse can be heard, a feminine writing can take place and enter into literary history.²⁹

Marguerite de Navarre's writing position is at once more simple than that of Christine de Pizan, and yet is complicated by the nature of her narrative. As substitute King and wife of a King, this woman writer did not need to appropriate authority from the literary canon to the same extent as Christine de Pizan: she was already invested with divine authority. It has already been argued that her essentially masculine education enabled her to assume, when necessary, a masculine role in society and that the authority of her rank might be seen to guarantee the authority of her writings. As has been addressed and will be further discussed in the conclusion of this thesis, Marguerite de Navarre appropriates male literary authority, but she does so far less explicitly than Christine de Pizan. Marguerite's identity grounds her writing in her

²⁹ Carla Freccero, 'Rewriting the Rhetoric of Desire in the *Heptameron*', in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth-Century England and France*, ed. by Marie-Rose Logan and Peter L. Rudnytsky (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 298-312 (p. 310).

femininity and she, like Christine, uses the female body within the *Heptaméron*; as object of desire, both in scenes of seduction and accounts of rape; as mother, fulfilling its necessary reproductive function; as speaker in the form of the female *devisants*.

Marguerite de Navarre writes as a man in as far as she retains the basic structure of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and inasmuch as she uses the established rhetorical devices of example and dialogue. Within the *Heptaméron*, however, her use of dialogue enables her to speak through the *devisants* both as a woman and as a man, dividing her voice between the sexes. Whilst there is no explicit evidence to identify Marguerite de Navarre as the narrator, it seems to be accepted that the narratorial voice is that of the Queen of Navarre.³⁰ This attribution of narratorial identity can be seen as an extension of my hypothesis that Marguerite derived authority more from her social position than from the explicit appropriation of *auctoritas* from earlier works. As Deborah N. Losse comments

If we attribute the social stature of the extrafictional voice to the public narrator of the *Heptameron*, a female member of France's royal family, there is a corresponding effect on two elements of narrative status. The reader is more likely to believe the narrator's claim for historical authenticity [...] One is apt to credit her with heightened diegetic authority [...] as well as an enhanced mimetic authority.³¹

This then presents several levels of gendered narrative voice within the framing voice of the narrator because, as Losse states 'the prologue functions as the entry into the diegetic narrative world' (p. 224). These levels of gendered narrative are interlaced throughout the text and, at this point, it would prove a profitable exercise to offer a structuralist diagram illustrating the various levels of gendered voices to be found in the *Heptaméron*, before I discuss these levels in depth. Terry Eagleton states that 'structuralism is a calculated affront to common sense' (p. 96) because 'it brackets off

³⁰ See, for example, Cathleen M. Bauschatz, 'Voilà, mes dames...: Inscribed Women Listeners and Readers in the *Heptameron*', in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the 'Heptameron' and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 104-22 (p. 105).

³¹ Deborah N. Losse, 'Authorial and Narrative Voice in the *Heptaméron*', *Renaissance & Reformation*, 23 (1987), 223-42 (p. 225).

the actual *content* of the story and concentrates entirely on form' (p. 95). Given that I have stressed throughout this thesis the importance of an appropriate socio-historic background, I shall therefore adopt a structuralist approach only for the purposes of clarifying the exegetic levels of gendered narrative voice in the *Heptaméron* and thereafter in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. In both diagrams, I have drawn upon models by Louise M. Haywood and Philippe de Lajarte, adopting Haywood's definition of the terms 'extradiegetic', 'diegetic' and 'intradiegetic'.³²

A) Extradiegetic level: Marguerite de Navarre as existing outside the text

B) Diegetic Level i: extradiegetic figure of Marguerite de Navarre as stimulus for storytelling activity

B) Diegetic Level ii: narrator of frame-story (possibly Marguerite de Navarre)

C) Intradiegetic Level i: world of the tales and *devisants*

C) Intradiegetic Level ii: tales with Marguerite in narrative, whether explicitly or hidden

D) Marguerite de Navarre as Parlamente

E) Marguerite as Parlamente narrates Marguerite existing in *récit* of *nouvelle* as extradiegetic persona
Tales (13), 42, 71

C) Intradiegetic Level: *devisants* as fictive audience

A) Extradiegetic Level i: contributors/ courtiers/ audience
Extradiegetic Level ii: real readers

³² Louise M. Haywood, 'Gradissa: A Fictional Female Reader In/ of A Male Author's Text', *Medium Aevum*, LXIV (1995), 84-99 (p. 85); Philippe de Lajarte, 'The voice of the Narrators in Marguerite de Navarre's Tales', in *Critical Tales*, 172-87 (p. 173). Haywood 'use[s] "extradiegetic" to refer to that which is predicated as existing outside the fictional construct [...] "diegetic" to refer to the first level of narrative [...] and "intradiegetic" to indicate further fiction levels embedded within the text', p. 97 n.

If we accept that the narrator of the frame-story at level **B** is the extradiegetic figure **A** of Marguerite de Navarre, we can say that Marguerite de Navarre is writing *as* a woman. However, I would contend that the decision to retain the anonymity of the author is a deliberate one which seeks to place the *Heptaméron* within (male) literary tradition: returning to Davis' assertion that the woman writer needs an audience to take her work seriously predicates the necessity of a 'serious' (and therefore male) framing discourse. Marguerite, by this deliberate anonymity appropriates male discourse in the prologue and can therefore be seen to be a woman at the extradiegetic level **A**, writing *as* a woman **A**, writing at the diegetic level **B ii** *like* a man. At the diegetic level **B i**, however, Marguerite, writing *as* a woman writing *like* a man, introduces the extradiegetic figure **A** of Marguerite de Navarre as providing the stimulus for the act of story-telling. This is further complicated by the fact that the *devisante* who introduces the extradiegetic figure **A** is Parlamente who, at level **D**, is the intradiegetic fictive character who represents Marguerite **A**, meaning that at level **B i** Marguerite, writing *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaks *as* a woman speaking of her extrafictional self. This reflexivity is continued at every diegetic level; at the intradiegetic level **C i**, where the *nouvelle* is narrated by one of the male *devisants*, Marguerite, writing *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaks *as* a man. This is further complicated by the fact that, at level **C i**, a large number of the tales narrated by a male *devisant* use direct speech as uttered by a female character within the narrative, meaning that Marguerite writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a man speaking *like* a woman. Similarly, in the many tales narrated by a woman *devisante* which employ direct speech uttered by a male character, Marguerite writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a woman speaking *like* a man. At level **C ii**, where the extradiegetic figure of Marguerite de Navarre is introduced into the narrative by one of the *devisants*, in the case of tales , 2, (4), (25), (62), 66, 68, Marguerite writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a woman speaking of her extrafictional persona **A**. In tales 1, 6, 22, 28, (42), 61, 72, Marguerite writes *as* a

woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a man speaking *of* her extrafictional persona A. Where I have enclosed the tale numbers in brackets, I mean to denote those tales in which, as I noted in Chapter Three, Marguerite is accepted to be a figure in the narrative, but without actually being named. For example, the Flemish princess of tale 4 is widely accepted to be Marguerite and the protagonist of tale 25 is held to be François Ier, thus making reference to Marguerite as his sister. Similarly, the prince in tale 42 is also presumed to be François, again placing Marguerite in the narrative as the childhood play-mate of the female protagonist and, in tale 62, the witty storytelling lady of royal blood is assumed to be the Queen of Navarre. For the purposes of greater clarity I have, therefore, dispensed with the square brackets employed in Chapter Three. At the intradiegetic level D, Marguerite writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a woman who represents her extradiegetic self, where at level E, in tales 42, 71 (and, to a lesser extent because she is not explicitly mentioned, tale 13), Marguerite writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man, speaking *as* a woman who represents her extrafictional self, speaking *of* (but not *as*) her extrafictional self. It is therefore evident that the *Heptaméron* employs every permutation of male and female discourse, without necessarily privileging one over the other. Only in the Prologue, if one respects the idea of a deliberately anonymous, non-gendered narrator, can it be said that, like Christine de Pizan, Marguerite attempts to find a middle ground of neutered discourse. Ultimately, like that of Christine, this attempt can be seen at best as an inchoate protean discourse, because of the inescapably male-generated nature of the literary canon within which she writes.

The *Livre de la Cité des Dames* also employs various levels of gendered discourse and reflexivity, but on a far less complex scale than the *Heptaméron*, as is apparent from the diagram on the following page, where only four levels of discourse are apparent in Christine's city, compared to the eight diegetic levels of Marguerite's abbey.

A) Extradiegetic Level: Christine de Pizan as court poet and author

B) Diegetic Level: frame-story of Christine's dream

C) Intradiegetic Level 1: Christine's dialogue with the Virtues on women

D) Intradiegetic Level 2:
Christine as extradiegetic
persona placed within the
exempla and as source of
authority where her other
written works are referred
to by the Virtues.

A) Extradiegetic Level: readers

In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine's existence as court poet and writer is predicated at the extradiegetic level **A**. At this level, Christine describes her 'frequentacion d'estude de lettres' as the 'exercice de [s]a vie', thereby establishing herself and, by extension her authority, as a scholar of 'divers auteurs [...] longue piece estudiés' [1]. Her authority is necessarily a masculine one, appropriated from the masculine literary canon. At this level, therefore, because she is simultaneously the extradiegetic person **A** and the narrator, writing *like* a man she speaks **and** writes (hereafter speaks/ writes) *as* a woman familiar with the language of men. She reinforces the reality of her social existence by introducing her own mother into her narrative when she 'fus appelé[e] de la bonne mere qui [se] porta pour prendre [...] du soupper' [1]. That she chooses her evening meal over the works of Matheolus is an ironic adumbration of the displeasure with which she will read his text, the text which will provoke her despondent reverie and her imploring prayer to God in which she speaks/ writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man speaking *as* a woman about the notion of a universalised Woman. Within the diegetic level **B**, or frame-story, of her allegorical vision, Christine is the passive audience of the three Virtues, thus

mirroring the role of the reader at the extradiegetic level **A**. The absence of dialogue from Christine during the explanatory speeches of the Virtues can be seen to reflect the silence of the woman reader she anticipates and allows her extradiegetic persona **A** as narrator to have authority conferred upon her at level **B** by these daughters of God. At this level, she speaks/ writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man listening *as* a woman. The intradiegetic level **C** can be seen to commence where Christine as extradiegetic figure **A** and narrator engages in dialogue with the Virtues. When Christine bewails her 'foible scens', rejects comparison with St Thomas and the King of India and doubts that her 'foible corps femenin' is capable of constructing the City [13a], she achieves several levels of engendered writing at level **C**: she speaks/ writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man adopting medieval humility formulae, speaking *as* a woman adapting medieval humility formulae by applying it to the real body of her extradiegetic persona. At the intradiegetic level **D**, Christine features in two ways; as the extradiegetic figure **A** used either as an example or as the witness to an example, and as the author of other texts cited or referred to by the Virtues, from which they draw authority. Additionally, by putting direct speech into the mouths of the Virtues, Christine adds another gendered level to the intradiegetic core of the text. Christine as extradiegetic author is first mentioned by Dame Reason when she comments 'comme tu as autrefois assez bien dit' [16a], using Christine's earlier writings to validate her argument. As was discussed in Chapter Two, on four other occasions [60], [100], [200] and [219a], Christine's earlier works are specifically referred to by the Virtues. In this therefore she speaks/ writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man speaking *as* a woman speaking of her extradiegetic persona as author. In [31], Christine places herself in the narrative as extradiegetic witness to the fact that a temperate woman can actually exist and in [186], she herself becomes the example to illustrate that there can be merit in the education of women. In this therefore she speaks/ writes *as* a woman writing *like* a man speaking *as* a woman speaking of her extradiegetic persona as example.

It is evident from these diagrams that, as Terry Eagleton noted, this method of structuralist approach affords no insight into the subject matter of the texts under examination because it is an analytical rather than evaluative approach, which Eagleton describes as 'rather like killing a person in order to examine more conveniently the circulation of the blood' (p. 109). It is not that I subscribe to Eagleton's view that structuralism 'has functioned as a kind of aid scheme for intellectually underdeveloped nations' (p. 123), but an exclusively structuralist approach ignores completely the central issues of the *Heptaméron* and the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and, as such, has no further place in this thesis. What this approach has indicated, however, is the level of self-inscription into the texts that both of these women writers practise. To this end, it would be well to consider how far the use of autobiographical theory as an element of gender theory might further this examination.

Sidonie Smith comments that, this century, autobiography has come to be understood as a creative or interpretative act and that, like every other school of critical theory, autobiography has evolved from a basic tool of interpretation into a multi-faceted area of debate which has come to question even whether autobiography is in fact a mode of literature or whether all literature might not be more accurately seen as a mode of autobiography.³³ This thesis is not conducted from the perspective of an autobiographical theorist and, to that end, I will not dwell here in depth upon the theoretical debate which currently surrounds this critical practice. Smith notes that there have been three stages in the development of autobiographical criticism: early autobiographical criticism concerned itself mainly with the *bios* of the author, where second-generation theorists came to focus more upon the *autos*, questioning the authorial struggle to shape an identity for the self and whose approach was grounded more in psychology than in facticity. Since then, structuralists and post-structuralists have sought to undermine confidence placed in the 'I' of autobiography by declaring the *autos* a narrative artifice, 'a convention of time and space where symbolic systems

³³ Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 1-7.

[...] speak themselves' (p. 5). Because, as Smith notes 'Currently all these approaches to autobiography coexist' (p. 7), my approach will be heuristic in order to illuminate the autobiographical aspects of these texts.

Smith states that 'until the last few years, the impact of gender on the autobiographical project has not been a serious focus of critical or theoretical inquiry' (p. 7). She contends also that in the early stages of autobiographical theory

the criteria used to evaluate the success of any particular autobiography lie in the relationship of the autobiographer to the arena of public life and discourse. Yet patriarchal notions of woman's inherent nature and consequential social role have denied or severely proscribed her access to the public space; and male distrust and consequent repression of female speech have either condemned her to public silence or profoundly contaminated her relationship to the pen as an instrument of power. (pp. 7-8)

In terms of this statement, by appropriating the male voice or speaking like a man, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre can be seen to be 'enacting the scenario of male self-hood' (p. 8). If earlier theory emphasised the representative nature of autobiography then, given the exceptional nature of these two women writers' lives and writings, might not their use of autobiography be considered as potentially less representative of women than of men? I would assert that this is not so because such elements of autobiography as exist in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* are specifically engaged with issues relating to women: for Christine, the lack of educational provision for women; for Marguerite, the importance of civic duty and the constant danger of rape. Christine's reference to the 'foible scens' [13a] of her intellect might be interpreted in three ways according to the criteria quoted above by Smith: firstly, one might infer that she is simply reiterating the traditional (and therefore male) medieval humility *topos* as part of the process of speaking like a man through the appropriation of established rhetorical devices; secondly, her words might be seen as 'the rhetorical utility of self-abnegation for a woman who would dare to speak' (p. 10); alternatively, it may be no more than the expression of appropriate Christian humility from a devout woman in a time of strict religious prescription. Indeed, although Smith locates the origins of autobiography in the late Middle Ages

as arising out of the Canonical insistence upon the equality of souls, she argues that it was only with the coming of the Renaissance and Reformation that 'a new, more flexible vision of human possibility' (p. 21) created the opportunity for less 'ritualized' self-examination.³⁴ She goes on to state that 'during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [...] individuals began to consider their life stories to be potentially valuable to their culture and therefore began to write about themselves with increasing regularity' (pp. 25-6). If we accept Lerner's assertion that 'the systematic educational disadvantaging of women has affected women's self-perceptions'³⁵ and that this disadvantaging suppressed the female sex into silence by precluding the possibility of female discourse, then it is eminently possible to agree with Smith and see autobiography for these women writers as 'ultimately an assertion of arrival and embeddedness in the phallic order' (p. 40). However, I have already established that Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre write *like* men and that, when seen from an appropriate historical perspective, their adoption of male discourse was fundamental to these texts, wherein they adapted traditional discourse to serve their own ends. Moreover, by deliberately introducing their extradiegetic (and therefore female) selves into their narratives, Christine and Marguerite can be seen to reject Smith's 'textual repression of woman that supports the phallic order' (p. 42). Smith's comment, however, that 'the fictions of the autobiographer are always mediated by a historic identity with specific intentions [...] of interpreting the meaning of her lived existence' (p. 46) reminds us that autobiography is inherently and inevitably unreliable, and it would be well to examine how Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre attempt to persuade the reader to suppress the recognition of this inevitability and thus to 'expect "truth" of some kind' (p. 46). This is achieved primarily by the insertion of only very small elements of autobiographical information into structures which depend upon the notion of truth. In the *Livre de la Cité des*

³⁴ Smith's argument is open to debate, as she neglects to mention such early 'autobiographies' as the letters of Abelard. However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to engage in a debate upon the history of autobiography: that elements of autobiography in texts written before 1400 is sufficient for this brief examination.

³⁵ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, p. 10.

Dames Christine establishes the 'truth' of her examples in several ways; as was discussed in Chapter Two, she uses examples drawn from earlier *auctores*, from well-known myth and legend and from European history, all of which establish the *auctoritas* of her text. More importantly, her use of Biblical example and the fact that the Virtues are described as the daughters of God significantly enhance the validity of her text, because for the reader to doubt the truth of the Bible would be considered heretical. The addition of personal information into a narrative which insists upon its veracity can be seen to validate the 'truth' of Christine's autobiography, as well as offering the reader another level of authority vested in personal experience. In the *Heptaméron*, as was noted in Chapter Three, in those tales where Marguerite participates explicitly, she does so as judge or mediator, thus incorporating the truth and social reality of her extradiegetic existence into the narrative. The relationship of autobiography to the text can therefore be seen in the *Heptaméron* as the inverse of the relationship of text to autobiography in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: in Christine's text, the established truths of known women and the emphasis upon religious authority manifested in the status of the Virtues and Biblical examples reflect authenticity upon Christine's self-inscription; in the *Heptaméron*, the insistence upon the authenticity of the examples cited, though revealed to be flawed by the insertion of already known tales, is enhanced by the active participation in the text of the extradiegetic author. In short, Christine's text validates her autobiographical episodes, Marguerite's self-inscription validates her text. In both instances, however, it should not be forgotten that this authorial struggle to establish truth was a vital element of literature during the period under examination; authenticity (and, by extension authority) was the prerequisite for a text's potential for edification. In this light, the autobiographical elements of the *Heptaméron* and of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* are more accurately seen as another level of authority derived from self-referential example. As in both texts the autobiographical elements are introduced by means of direct speech from characters in the narrative and not by a self-naming 'je', I

will move my study now to the level of linguistic analysis, beginning with an examination of the use of dialogue by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre.

Norman Fairclough notes that previously within the field of linguistics 'little attention [was] paid to struggle and transformation in power relations and the role of language therein'.³⁶ Because this thesis does not base itself within the field of linguistics, I shall not engage in depth with theoretical linguistics, but restrict my examination here to one of discourse analysis. By 'discourse' I mean what is commonly used in linguistics 'to refer to extended samples of either spoke or written language' and which 'emphasizes interaction between speaker and addressee or between writer and reader' (p. 3). Each text under examination uses both written and spoken language and relies upon an interactive relationship between the speakers and, ultimately, an intellectual engagement between the writer and reader. Fairclough notes that the term discourse is also 'widely used in social theory and analysis' and that 'discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or "constitute" them' (p. 3), favouring an analysis which 'sees texts as simultaneously representing reality, enacting social relations, and establishing identities' (pp. 8-9). Such a method, according to Fairclough, must necessarily be critical and engage with the concept of intertextuality within discourse. Fairclough states that 'texts always draw upon and transform other contemporary and historically prior texts' (pp. 39-40), broadly defining this as intertextuality, which he notes is a term 'coined by Kristeva in the late 1960's' (p. 101). Intertextuality itself, however, can be further refined into 'manifest' intertextuality and 'interdiscursivity' or 'constitutive intertextuality' (p. 117). I will illustrate here that the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* make use of 'manifest' and 'constitutive' intertextuality, that the dialogic structure privileges interaction within the text and between text and reader, and that ultimately, when considered from an appropriate historical perspective, these linguistic elements can be seen as integral to the rhetorical device of authority.

³⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), p. 2.

At the level of 'manifest' intertextuality, which Fairclough defines as 'the explicit presence of other texts in a text' (p. 10), Christine de Pizan makes greater use of other texts and authors than does Marguerite de Navarre. In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine cites from the Bible and uses the well-known legends of, amongst many others, the Amazons, Dido, Medea and Hero. She also explicitly mentions Matheolus, Aristotle, Plato, Jean de Meung, Ovid, Virgil, Cecco d'Ascoli, Cato, Boccaccio, Homer, Petrarch, Theophrastus, Socrates, Seneca and herself. Of these authors, she quotes directly from only one, Boccaccio,³⁷ but explicitly names: Matheolus' *Lamentations*; Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; Jean de Meung's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*; the anonymous *De phillosophie*; Ovid's *Art of Love*; the anonymous *Du secret des femmes*; her own *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, *Epistre de Othea*, *Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose* and *Epistre au dieu d'amours*; the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In contrast, Marguerite de Navarre mentions only Jean de Meung, Plato, Virgil and Dante, quoting from and naming only Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the *Roman de la Rose* and Chartier's *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*. At the level of 'interdiscursivity', or 'constitutive' intertextuality, which Fairclough defines as 'the constitution of a text from a configuration of text types or discourse conventions' (p. 10), Christine de Pizan draws her basic structure from the *Livre de Leësce*, where Marguerite de Navarre uses the structural model of the *Decameron*. In both texts, each woman writer uses unattributed sources, and each rewrites or edits earlier source material: Christine adapts traditional myth and legend to create an alternative view of women, where Marguerite uses tales from the *novella* tradition as a vehicle for social commentary. At this discursive level, both writers make use of dialogue between their narrative figures to form the internal structure of their texts, what Fairclough would term an 'interactional control feature' in that it ensures 'smooth interactional organization – the distribution of turns, selection and

³⁷ On Cornificia, Christine writes 'Bocace l'Italien, qui fu grant pouette, en louant ceste femme dist en son livre "O! tres grant honneur a femme qui a laissé toute oeuvre femenine et a applicqué et donné son engin aux estudes des tres haultx clers' [83a]. She also quotes from Boccaccio's legend of Hypsicratea and at length on the subject of Argia, who risked death to retrieve her husband's decomposing body from the battle-field [158a].

change of topics, opening and closing of interactions' (p. 152). In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, therefore, Christine's questions to the three Virtues open the verbal interactive process, selecting and changing the topic of discussion through the solicitation of a response from one of the Virtues. Fairclough notes that interactional control features 'embody specific claims about social and power relations between participants' (p. 152), something which is immediately apparent in the turn-taking structure of the *Heptaméron*: as Fairclough goes on to say 'turn-taking systems are not always built around equal rights and obligations for all participants' (p. 153), a statement which can be seen in the Prologue, when Hircan speaks to Simontault, saying 'Puisque vous avez commencé la parole, c'est raison que vous commandez; car au jeu nous sommes tous esgaulx' (p. 10). Power-games are played out through the use of turn-taking in the *Heptaméron*: on the first day, Saffredent agrees to tell his tale before those 'plus antiens experimentez que luy' only because 'plus il y en avoit de bien parlans, et plus son compte seroit trouvé mauvays' (I, 2); on the second day, Simontault tells his tale 'pour [s]'en venger' (II, 13) and on the fourth day, Hircan chooses Ennasuite to speak 'pour la recompenser contre [sa] femme' (IV, 35). These are only three examples out of many, but it would be fair to say that power plays an important part in the texts of both these women writers. Fairclough states that 'power does not work negatively by forcefully dominating those who are subject to it; it incorporates them, and is "productive" in the sense that it shapes and "retools" them to fit in with its needs' (p. 50), noting the dual relationship of power and knowledge. From an historical perspective this relationship is more accurately seen in the educational disadvantaging of women during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: by allowing women only very limited access to knowledge, patriarchal society retained its power over the female sex. The education (and therefore knowledge) of these women writers empowers them to write within the power-structure of the literary canon. Christine de Pizan invests her interlocutors with divine knowledge to give their arguments power, and the female storytellers of Marguerite de Navarre offer the knowledge of eye-witness testimony in the power struggle of the

querelle des femmes played out at the abbey of Sarrance. In each text, the power of knowledgeable argument invites an intellectual engagement on the part of the reader, while the use of dialogue within the narrative encourages an interactive reading of the text, in which the reader feels her/ himself an active participant in a verbal debate. At the same time, however, it must not be forgotten that the use of dialogue may also be accurately seen in context as a rhetorical trope of the 'feminist' thinkers of the *querelle des femmes*: as has been noted on several occasions, 'feminist' writers often produced texts in dialogue form, where one speaker was a virulent 'anti-feminist', and who was not uncommonly converted to the female cause by the close of the text. Neither Christine's nor Marguerite's text achieve this conversion within the text, but it can be argued that their narrative representation of the female sex was intended to force an acknowledgement on the part of the reader of the flaws in the prevailing notion of Woman, thereby promoting the possibility for a reassessment of gender relations in society.

I would like to offer here a reassessment of the gender relations depicted in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* through the use of psychoanalytical theory, an area fraught with anachronistic potential. Jean Leclercq notes that

The question of the relationship between history and psychology, though certainly more acute today, is not new; the two phenomena have been intimately connected since the beginning of time. If there is any novelty in the problem, it concerns the bond between the two disciplines. To what extent can modern methods in psychology be applied to the interpretation of historical facts and events?³⁸

This is a question I attempted to address earlier in this chapter, when I suggested that it becomes easier to accommodate the use of modern psychoanalytical theory on earlier texts if we think chronologically and view modern theory as having arisen out of an earlier awareness of sexual imagery. By foregrounding the historical precedents of modern theory, it is possible to say with Leclercq that 'psychoanalysis can be ancillary to history' (p. 476). I will begin by examining selected examples from the

³⁸ Jean Leclercq, 'Modern Psychology and the Interpretation of Medieval Texts', *Speculum*, XLVIII (1973), 476-90 (p. 476).

Livre de la Cité des Dames and the *Heptaméron*; as I noted earlier, the sheer volume of *exempla* preclude a comprehensive examination of every woman depicted in the two texts.

In the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine de Pizan narrates the story of Lilia [76] 'mere du vaillant chevalier Tierris' who 'par le tres bon nourrissement et admonicions de sa mere, moult vertueux et excellentment moriginez estoit'. Faced with her son's impending desertion from the battle-field after all attempts at persuasive arguments have failed, Lilia 'leva sa robe par devant et luy dist: "Vrayment, biaux filz, tu n'as ou fouyr se tu ne retournes derechief ou ventre dont tu yssis"'. In terms of the professed objective of the narrative, Lilia's action succeeds; 'Adonc fu Tierris si honteux que il laissa la fuyte, rassembla sa gent et retourna en la bataille'. This example lends itself to various psychoanalytical readings: one might contend that Lilia suffers from penis-envy and that in inviting her son to return to her womb, she is attempting to paper over her castration by appropriating her son's phallus; alternatively, it might be possible to see Lilia as having a Jocasta complex, and that by her remark to Tierris, she is manifesting her subconscious desire for her son to penetrate her sexually. Fleeing from his mother in shame to assert his virility on the battle-field, one might infer that Tierris too suffers from an Oedipal complex, where the fear of castration acts as a deterrent to incest. Ultimately, I would suggest that this example lends itself to two historically appropriate interpretations; firstly, it is possible that Christine de Pizan is attesting to her awareness of traditional male disgust of female sexuality by having Tierris flee in horror from his mother's genitalia; secondly, one could contend that this example forms part of Christine's attempt to prove that women can participate actively in society without taking up arms, a process she begins by socialising her children, as Lilia did Tierris. I find it difficult to impose a Jocasta complex onto this female figure, firstly because her initial response was to reason with her son and, secondly, because of the explicit 'onneur' that Lilia accrues for having saved Italy from invaders by her action. Conversely, tale 30 of the *Heptaméron*, introduced by Hircan as 'piteuse et estrange'

offers far more potential for psychoanalytical criticism. In this *nouvelle*, a devout young widow devotes her life to her son and to the avoidance of every occasion for sin. Her son having reached his teens, he makes sexual advances towards a chambermaid in the household who, in turn, confides in her mistress. Unable to believe her son capable of lascivious behaviour, she takes the maid's place in bed, where, 'elle convertit sa collere en ung plaisir trop abominable, obliant le nom de mere.' Not only does she commit incest with her son, but she conceives a child in so doing. Her son is dispatched to the army, her daughter safely delivered and placed in the retinue of Queen Catherine and the years pass until her son writes, asking permission to return home with his new bride, whereupon 'La dame, qui s'enquist quelle alliance il avoit prinse, trouva que c'estoit la propre fille d'eulx deux'. In desperation, she turns to the papal legate who, in concurrence with other theologians, decides 'que la dame ne debvoit jamais rien dire de ceste affaire à ses enffans, car, quant à eulx, veu l'ignorance, ilz n'avoient point peché', where she must 'toute sa vie faire penitence'. The mother in this tale does not attempt to reason with her son, as Lilia did Tierris, and her decision to assume the younger woman's place in the bed is, at best, morally dubious. The modern psychoanalyst would be forgiven for finding this woman's actions indicative of a repressed sexual desire for her son, and for concluding that, suffering from penis-envy, she has endeavoured to appropriate the phallus of power by covering her own castration with her son's organ, but it may be more appropriate to view her actions from the religious perspective foregrounded in the narrative. Linguistically, Marguerite de Navarre suggests that this woman's downfall is not her desire for her son or for a phallus, but her pride. Although it is stated that she does not remarry 'pour l'amour de son enfant', this is more accurately seen as a reflection of feudal society, in which a second husband might be tempted to harm the son of another man in order to preserve his own succession. The widow's religious pride is variously revealed; the ostentation of her faith is hinted at when the text states that 'elle faisoit conscience d'assister à nopces ou d'ouyr sonner les orgues en une eglise' and later, her choice of instructor for her son 'par lequel il peust estre

endoctriné en toute sainteté et devotion' is juxtaposed with the 'autre leçon que son maistre d'escolle ne faisait' and his overtures to the chambermaid. Ultimately, the responsibility for the incestuous marriage of her children is laid at the door of her pride, because 'la racine de l'orgueil que le peché extérieur doit guerir, croissoit tousjours, en sorte que, en evitant ung mal, elle en fait plusieurs autres', and by sending away the physical cause of her incest, she causes him to commit incest a second time with the physical manifestation of his first incestuous sexual act. In tale 30 the incest taboo (which Lévi-Strauss contends is the basic foundation of society), is broken twice, between mother and son and between brother and sister/ father and daughter. The latter, however, goes unpunished, and the incestuous young couple are depicted as the most contented husband and wife/ father and daughter/ brother and sister in existence. It seems barely probable, but this expression of sexual filial love could be viewed as the narrative representation of Marguerite's repressed desire for her brother, a desire she projects onto her text as she denies her castration by appropriating the phallic pen. Patricia Cholakian notes that François Génin in 1842 used a letter from Marguerite to François, dated 1521, 'to prove that the king and his sister were involved in an incestuous relationship', but states that 'subsequent scholars have dismissed this theory with considerable vehemence'.³⁹ It is more believable, however, that Marguerite is giving vent to her Reformist views and that, by exposing the illogic of the papal legate in allowing the father/ daughter/ brother/ sister relationship to continue in Edenic innocence, she implies a criticism of the Gallican church, emphasised by the fact that the post-narration debate turns into a discussion of abuses within the religious orders. Another permutation of the incest taboo is found in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, where Christine de Pizan narrates the tale of the Roman woman who breastfeeds her imprisoned mother [147]. A post-Freudian analysis of this narrative would contend that the Roman woman is bound by her pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother, that as a woman she does not repress her desire for

³⁹ Patricia Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 10. Cholakian refers specifically to Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492-1549): Etude Biographique et Littéraire*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1930), pp. 62-6 for a refutation of the incest theory.

her mother as would a man to gain entry into the symbolic order. Alternatively, we should perhaps consider this passage in context as part of Rectitude's response to Christine's demand to know why men are unhappy if their wives give birth to daughters: by breastfeeding her mother, Christine's heroine not only displays appropriate filial loyalty, but validates the state of motherhood; the natural function of lactation is elevated to a virtue which ultimately secures her mother's release, and which could be seen as part of a strategy to deconstruct the universalised female body. Lilia's genitalia saves Italy from invasion, this woman's breasts save her mother from death. Both Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre inscribe their mothers into their texts, but I would find it problematic to assert that, by having appropriated the phallus-like pen, they are exhibiting an unresolved Oedipal complex towards their mothers. Indeed, I would contend that neither Christine nor Marguerite suffer from penis-envy, and that too much emphasis has been placed upon the notion of sexual transformation in these texts. In tales 15 and 70 of the *Heptaméron*, the notion of transformation of woman into man is posited, although in different ways and under different circumstances. Tale 15 depicts a young and beautiful woman whose husband neglects her, who finds solace with a series of lovers and who ultimately comes to despise her husband, perverting his attempts to keep her under surveillance by playing tricks upon him. Of this woman, Simontault remarks that she 'a oblyé, pour ung temps, qu'elle estoit femme; car ung homme n'en eust sceu faire plus belle vengeance'. In tale 70, Marguerite's re-writing of the *Chastelaine de Vergi* narrated by Oisille, the wicked Duchess, driven to distraction by her passion, 'oubliant qu'elle estoit femme [...] print le cueur d'un homme transporté pour descharger le feu qui estoit importable'. When rebuffed by the young object of her affections, her desire for revenge leads to the tragic death of the young man, his mistress and brings about her own death at the hands of her husband. In both instances, these women are described only as having *forgotten* their femininity and as having appropriated male characteristics, and in neither case does this appropriation confer any kind of praise on the male sex. It is only in the *Livre des Trois Vertus* and the *Livre de la mutacion de fortune* that we find

any explicit mention of transformation by Christine. As was discussed in Chapter Two, in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, she defines 'avoir cuer d'omme' as 'c'est qu'elle doit savoir des drois d'armes' (II, IX) and later Christine's advice to the widow whose household faces invasion is 'que elle prengne cuer d'omme, c'est assavoir constant, fort et sage' (III, IV); in this, Christine's representation of the male heart is more sympathetic than that of Marguerite. In the *Livre de la mutacion de fortune*, however, Christine's personal 'transformation' after the death of her husband is narrated and provides a wealth of sexual imagery for the psychoanalytical critic.

- [1325] Adont vers moy vint ma maistresse,
 Qui a plusieurs la joye estrece,
 Si me toucha par tout le corps;
 1328 Chacun membre, bien m'en recors,
 Manÿa et tint a ses mains
 Puis s'en ala et je remains,
 Et, comme nostre nef alast
 1332 Aux vagues de la mer, frapast
 Contre une roche moult grant cas;
 Je m'esveillay et fu le cas
 Tel qu'incontinent et sanz doubte
 1336 Transmuee me senti toute
 Mes membres senti trop plus fors
 Qu'ainçois et cil grant desconfors
 Et le plour, ou adés estoie
 1340 Auques remis; si me tastoie
 Moy meismes com toute esbahie.
 Ne m'ot pas Fortune enhaÿe
 Adont, qui si me tresmua,
 1344 Car tout soubdainement mua
 Celle grant paour et la doubte,
 Ou je me confondi toute.
 Si me senti trop plus legiere
 1348 Que ne souloye et que ma chiere
 Estoit muee et enforcie
 Et ma voix forment engrossie
 Et corps plus dur et plus isnel,
 1352 Mais choit de mon duy fu l'anel
 Qu'Ymeneüs donné m'avoit,
 Dont me pesa, et bien devoit,
 Car je l'amoie chierement.
 1356 Si me levay legierement,
 Plus ne me tins en la parece
 De plour, qui croissoit ma destrece.
 Fort et hardi cuer me trouvay,
 1360 Dont m'esbahi, mais j'esprouvay
 Que vray homme fus devenu;
 (I, pp. 51-3)

In this passage, the Freudian or post-Freudian critic might be tempted to conclude that Christine is either giving expression to her homosexual tendencies, or that the sexual imagery of this passage suggests that she is indulging in the 'creative onanism' noted above. Certainly, the female figure of Fortune who touches Christine's body would give credence to a lesbian interpretation, but the imagery of stiffening members proves a little more problematic, and the metaphor of the sea might be seen as representative of amniotic fluid, giving birth to the transformed Christine, an image reinforced by the word 'engrossie'. I would contend that this passage does not support a lesbian interpretation, because the images of strength and rigidity are resonant more of the aroused male body. Rather, I would suggest that Fortune is not Christine's lover but her mother, in whose womb Christine is 'transformed' into the 'vray homme' she must be to assume the masculine role and that, when viewed from an appropriate socio-historic context, this metamorphosis is more accurately seen in two ways: as a figurative exposition of the strength necessary to fulfil the masculine role, and as a rhetorical device designed to confer masculinity upon herself and therefore validate her *auctoritas*. That Christine lays emphasis upon the selective *appropriation* of masculine characteristics is reinforced by the use of transvestism in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Hypsicratea, wife of Mithridates [155] who, because 'l'abit de femme n'estoit pas convenable ne expedient que une femme [...] fust veue en bataille', cuts her hair off, dirties her face and dresses as a man to fight at her husband's side. In this, she adumbrates the wifely love of the Roman women who, while visiting their husbands in jail, exchange clothes with their spouses. After allowing their husbands to escape, these women take their places on the scaffold, where their identity is discovered and 'chascun ot admiracion de leur saige cautelle; si en furent louees' [167]. Later in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine narrates the tales of three Christian women transvestites: Marina (later canonised) whose religious fervour is such that she disguises herself as 'Martin' to enter the monastic orders, accepts undeserved blame and punishment when another member of the order fathers a child. Her secret goes unnoticed until after her death, when the monks discover the truth as

they prepare her body for burial, simultaneously discovering the restorative powers of her corpse [288]. Although Marina is simply described as a virgin, Euphrosyna, faced with the prospect of impending marriage 'en propos de garder sa virginité, s'en fouy vestue en guise d'omme' [289]. She too lives as a monk, able to comfort her unwitting father over her disappearance for many years until her death. Natalia, the third Christian transvestite, having persuaded her husband to convert to Christianity, sees him imprisoned. Eventually, after a ban on women visitors, she resorts to transvestism in order to see her husband, offering him Christian comfort until his execution [296]. All of these women are in some way useful to a man through their transvestism; Hypsicratea, the Roman women and Natalia all help their husbands; Marina saves the father of the illegitimate child, while Euphrosyna eases her father's grief. Significantly, the only instance of religious transvestism in the *Heptaméron* is far from happy: in tale 31, the female protagonist of the tale is forced by her *Cordelier* kidnapper to cut off her hair and wear a monk's robe in order to walk unnoticed past her husband. Luckily, she is recognised by one of her husband's servants and rescued, with the result that 'et fut le [...] monastere spolyé de ses larcins et des belles filles qui estoient dedans, et les moynes y enfermez dedans bruslerent avecq'. Again, Marguerite uses her narrative to criticise the institutionalised abuses of the religious orders: her heroine is defiled, not empowered or useful, by the wearing of men's clothing. One woman who is empowered as an independent individual by her transvestism, but without reference to the Church, is found in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Bernabo's wife is forced to escape in male garb after her husband, duped by a friend through a combination of circumstantial evidence and voyeurism into believing that she has been unfaithful, orders her execution. Until now, she has remained nameless, described only 'la femme Bernabo' or 'la femme de Bernaba': only with her transvestism does she assume an identity, albeit a false one, of her own. Ignorant of the reasons for her death sentence, she disguises herself, calls herself Sagaurat, and enters the service of a rich Catalan gentleman, where s/he distinguishes him/herself. Whilst travelling with her/ his master, s/he is seen by the Sultan of Babylon who buys

her/ him from the Spaniard 'et a breif dire, tant et si bien servy Sagaurat le souldan que il ne se fioit en autre que luy; et estoit si grant maistre entour luy que il le gouvernoit comme tout' [215c]. In terms of psychoanalytical theory, the act of self-naming is significant in that it allows Sagaurat to create an identity without reference to another man, it liberates the individual from the ancillary role of wife, it allows Sagaurat to place herself as himself within the symbolic order. Whilst in the service of the Sultan, Sagaurat meets Ambrose, the former friend of Bernabo. Sagaurat recognises Ambrose, and, piecing together the trick played upon her husband, has the Sultan send for Bernabo. In front of the whole assembly, Sagaurat forces Ambrose to acknowledge that he spied upon Bernabo's wife and stole her purse, and that this evidence, coupled with his voyeuristic knowledge of Bernabo's wife's birthmark, led him to convince Bernabo of his wife's guilt. Significantly, Sagaurat does not use direct speech in the text until the moment of confrontation. By assuming the masculine role, s/he reverses the order of their relationship and threatens Bernabo with the death sentence for the false condemnation of his wife. Ultimately, she reveals herself by unbuttoning her shirt and making public show of the birthmark beneath her left breast. In this, she re-establishes her physical identity by the exposure of her sexual identity and with it rescinds her power to act; the Sultan has Ambrose put to death. Only while disguised can Sagaurat act independently; as Bernabo's wife, she resumes her place in the sexual pecking order. Those women who attempt to assert their individuality in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron* are most often punished, usually by rape or attempted rape. I have discussed in Chapter Three the significance of the number of rapes in the *Hemptaméron* and have examined the examples used by Christine de Pizan on the subject of rape in Chapter Two. In this chapter, I would like to examine briefly the psychology of rape.

The Sabine women of Christine's narrative are raped and kidnapped as the spoils of war; in this, their sexuality is devalued, and provokes further warfare. However, the public exhibition of their sexual subjection, walking barefoot and pregnant to the battlefield, brings about an end to the battle because 'ce qui est fait est

fait et ne puet autrement estre' [178b]. The link between rape and warfare is further established in almost all of the examples of rape victims in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*: the rape of Lucretia [195] by Tarquin brings about the fall of Rome and Paris' rape of Helen [234] 'fu l'achoisson pourquoy Troye fu destruite'. These women are both exceptional in some way: Lucretia exceptionally virtuous and Helen exceptionally beautiful. Christine mirrors the violence of rape in the violence of the repercussions of rape. Indeed, the psychoanalytical critic might conclude that the battles either surrounding or resulting from rape in Christine's text represent rape itself, where the penetration of the sword into another human body mirrors the act of aggressive penetration during rape. Lucretia can be seen therefore to publicly re-enact her rape by stabbing herself: having been denied the right of choice, she selects her own phallic weapon and chooses to penetrate her own body with the knife she reveals from under her dress. The act of self-penetration to avoid rape is found also in the example of Sicambrian women [297a] who, 'bien savoyent que, selonc l'usage de guerre, toutes seroyent efforcees' defend themselves actively through the taking-up of arms, thereby appropriating the phallic sword, and who kill themselves rather than face rape, and for Virginia [198], the figurative penetration of death at the hands of her attacker is preferable to the literal penetration of rape. Only one group of women escapes without assault or death; the Lombard women [199] depicted by Christine place raw chicken meat on their breasts and the resultant stench of putrefying flesh deters their attackers. Similarly, in the *Heptaméron*, few of the intended victims escape without harm and even fewer escape the rape act itself in narratives often redolent with suppressed sexual imagery. I will discuss here only those tales where an aggressive rape is enacted or attempted, leaving aside the instances of disguise and mistaken identity which have been adequately discussed in Chapter Three. The *muletière* of tale 2, an exceptionally virtuous woman, suffers both the penetration of the sword and the phallus. The breaking-down of the partition enclosing the female space of her bed suggests the breaking-into of her interior female space during the aggressive sexual act. The many stab wounds inflicted upon her as she attempts to

escape adumbrate the act of penetration and might be seen as 'foreplay' for the assailant. In tale 4, the Flemish princess, too has her female space invaded by means of a trap-door: as was noted in Chapter Three, the ease with which the assailant gains entry into the female space is indicative of the ease with which he expects to enter her body. By fighting off her attacker, the princess might be seen to threaten his virility, figuratively to castrate him. When viewed from this perspective, her attacker reacts to the threat of castration, making his escape only when his castration is witnessed by the arrival of the servant. Floride in tale 10 manages to avoid two rape attempts by Amadour. These are examined in some detail by Cholakian,⁴⁰ and are discussed in Chapter Three, but I will look briefly again at them here. The first attempted rape in the tale takes place when Floride visits Amadour in his bedroom as he feigns illness. Floride does not, however, enter Amadour's space willingly; she does so 'à la requeste mesmes de son mary'. The second attempted rape takes place in Floride's bedroom some years later and, again, Floride is not a willing participant in the scene, having been ordered to entertain Amadour by her mother. In both instances, Floride cries out for help and escapes unscathed. She herself is powerless, constrained by her identity as daughter and wife. Her only means of self-preservation is self-expression, relying on those who dictate her actions to save her. Sister Marie-Heroet too is forced to cry out for release from the hands of her attacker in tale 22. Marie-Heroet 'se deffendit si bien de parolles et de bras', that her attacker 'luy meit la main soubz la robbe, et tout ce qu'il peut toucher des ongles esgratina', he penetrates her flesh, but does not succeed in his pursuit of sexual gratification because 'la pauvre fille, en cryant bien fort, de tout son hault tumba à terre' and is rescued by the Abbess. The victim of tale 45 is placed in danger by her mother who, believing the sincerity of a *Cordelier*, sends him to her daughter's room to punish her laziness, whereupon he rapes the daughter as she sleeps. This tale mirrors the previous one in that both victims are raped because other women in the household give consent for a man to enter their female space, but in the case of tale 45, the assault is not described as rape because the

⁴⁰ Cholakian, *Rape and Writing*, chapter 7, pp. 88-104.

social status of the chambermaid reduces her to the level of chattel for her master. The final aggressive rape in tale 62 is narrated by the victim as having happened to another, only to reveal inadvertently her identity. Again, her assailant enters her space and her body; the spurs he has not removed from his feet can be seen to be symbolic, not only of his penetration of her flesh, but might also be seen to reduce the victim to the level of an animal. In every case of rape or attempted rape in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron*, regardless of the degree of sexual imagery in the narrative, the victim is repressed as a woman in some way, whether it be by her assailant who represses her individuality by subordinating her to the level of sexual object, by her mother, mistress or husband whose dictates place her in the way of assault or, in the case of tale 4 of the *Heptaméron*, by the servant who represses the princess's desire for revenge. The psychoanalytical critic of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* might find in the Amazons a representation of the repressed male notion of female ferocity which provides the rationalisation for the male urge to subdue women, and it might be said that the erroneous notion of Woman's sexual rapacity is at the root of rape because Man believes that Woman desires intercourse. However, when situated within an appropriate socio-historic context, the issue of rape takes on a social, rather than psychoanalytical, significance: it might be said that the exceptionally good, virtuous or beautiful nature of the rape victim threatens the male assailant with castration, but it is less anachronistic to view rape as an inherent aspect of patriarchal society; an exercise of male power in a society that believed women as eager for sexual gratification as men, where resistance was simply the easiest way for a woman to salve her conscience. As Annette Barnes noted 'It is not that Freud cannot bring reasons in; it is that I must buy a whole apparatus of covert sexual symbolism',⁴¹ She goes on to draw the following analogy:

It is absurd to burden Christopher Robin with the resolution of his Oedipal complex. This is not to claim that *if* Freud were correct and Christopher were a real boy, he would not face the Oedipal situation. Rather it is to say that the work is not about that situation. (p. 6)

⁴¹ Annette Barnes, in *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, prologue, p. 4.

I would contend that these works by Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre are not about psychoanalysis and that, whilst it is an interesting academic exercise to seek out early expressions of sexual imagery in these texts, it is unreasonable to impose upon these women writers a system of sexual significances based upon their presupposed desire for a penis. The psychoanalytical emphasis upon penis-envy becomes particularly inappropriate, as it should be remembered that I discussed above the notion that women did, in fact, have a penis – an inverted one.⁴² Ultimately, unlike a scientific theorem, critical theory cannot be proven or disproven and has become something of a requirement in any academic examination of literature.

I hope to have shown, therefore, that no single school of modern critical thought can be applied in its entirety to these texts, but that a selective approach to theory can promote a deeper understanding of the levels of meaning, discourse, fictionality and structure in earlier works. In the Conclusion I will make continued, if marginal, use of critical theory as I draw together these writers' uses of example and authority in the narrative representation of women, beginning with an examination of whether these women writers are more accurately seen as 'feminists' or feminists.

⁴² See above, pp. 160-1.

CONCLUSION

When conducting an examination of the narrative representation of women by women writers, the scholar may be tempted to allow her/ his study to base itself upon several *a priori* assumptions about these women writers: that these writers will be feminists; that these women will write differently from men; that their writings will be in some way similar to one another – a *proto-écriture féminine* based upon their shared gender. I propose to deal with these assumptions in order, discussing first whether or not they might be termed feminist writers; I will examine next the ways in which similarities and, by extension differences, can be detected in the works of Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre; finally, I shall discuss briefly whether overall they can be said to write differently from men. Finally, I shall draw some overall conclusions about the use of example and authority in the works of Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre.

In the preceding three chapters I have noted the presence of 'feminist' or 'antifeminist' rhetorical devices in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, the *Livre des Trois Vertus* and the *Heptaméron*. I would like now to examine whether Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre could be termed feminist writers in the modern sense of the word or whether, as Régine Reynolds-Cornell states 'feminism was as meaningless a concept as that of democracy in Marguerite's lifetime'.¹ Dale Spender writes that '[n]either now nor in the past has feminism been a monolith and while there is no question that for as long as men have held power, women have protested, that protest has taken many forms and for many different reasons'.² If we accept that protest forms an integral part of feminism, then both Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre can be seen as feminists, in that they both protest against the universalised notion of Woman. However, Hilda Smith contends that '[c]omplaints about the position of

¹ Régine Reynolds-Cornell, 'Waiting in the Wings: The Characters in Marguerite de Navarre's *Théâtre Profane*', in *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. by Régine Reynolds-Cornell (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1995), 79-91 (p. 89)

² *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions*, ed. by Dale Spender (London: The Women's Press, 1983), p. 7.

women, or displeasure expressed about the life of a particular woman do not, by themselves, constitute feminism'.³ Smith goes on to say that

Unless the individual asks the question "why" about the actions she considers detrimental to women, she is no feminist. And further, if she does ask "why" and her answer does not include an understanding of women as a sociological group (as opposed to merely a sex or biological entity), then again she is no feminist. (p. 371)

Christine certainly asks the Virtues 'why' men have spoken so detrimentally of women, but her understanding of women relies upon her acceptance of the existence of a female sex. This is a necessary part of her defiance of the uni-polar theory of sex-identity: in order to refute the notion that Woman is an imperfect man, Christine must deliberately posit the notion of another, female, sex and in this she cannot be deemed a feminist under Smith's terms. Marguerite, too, speaks of women's 'nature', thus positing a unifying disposition common to the members of the female sex: those women who are evil or vengeful are, as was examined in the preceding chapter, described as having 'forgotten' that they are women. This might at first seem irreconcilable with my hypothesis that both writers reject universalising generalisation, but can be readily clarified when viewed from a Christian perspective. Christine and Marguerite both reject the concept of universalised Man or Woman: for them, women make up one of the two deliberately posited sexes which make up the human race, thus women and men *as human beings* have in their divinely-created souls a love of virtue. Neither all men nor all women are perfectly virtuous, just as they are not all evil incarnate: men and women inhabit the space between the two poles of Man and Woman where the two sexes can exist, each with the innate capacity for goodness. At the same time, however, because both Christine and Marguerite reveal the codes of conduct propounded for the 'ideal' woman to be irreconcilable with 'real' society, they can also be seen to depict women as a group with a fundamental

³ Hilda Smith, 'Feminism and the Methodology of Women's History', in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. by Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 368-84 (p. 370).

social role. Gerda Lerner's definition of feminist consciousness relies, like Smith's, upon the 'awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but is societally determined'.⁴ That Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre argue for women's active participation in society suggests women as a group are repressed within that society. That both writers discuss the social significance of rape is indicative of the sexual subordination of women within male-dominated society. In this way, Christine and Marguerite can be seen to identify women both as a sex and as a social group: that they should therefore be feminists and yet not feminists is indicative of the difficulties, not to say dangers, inherent in attempting to define these writers according to modern criteria. The Chambers Dictionary defines a feminist as 'an advocate or favourer of women; a student of women'. This would seem to provide the solution to the problem of definition: in the very broadest terms, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre can be seen both as 'feminists' and as feminists. Both writers adopt the device of dialogue, in its original inception a tool for instruction and which had evolved, by the Renaissance, into a trope used predominantly by 'feminist' writers. Both use 'feminist' *exempla* to denote the capacity or potential for virtue in most women. That they attempt at all to engage in a rehabilitation of the female sex can be seen as a feminist act, but I have shown in the preceding four chapters that the alternative views of women represented in their narratives fall broadly into line with the canonical exhortation to virtue, chastity and obedience. Although both writers illustrate the capacity of women to assume the masculine role, they advocate this assumption only in the absence of a male relative. Although both Christine and Marguerite depict educated women in their narratives, they do not demand a comprehensive education programme for women. Although they illustrate the abuses and infidelities inherent in marriage, both writers insist upon wifely obedience. In the very broadest sense of the Chambers definition, Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre were indeed feminists, but to attempt to define these

⁴ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14.

writers in terms of twentieth-century feminism is not only highly problematic (not least because of the diverse nature of feminism itself) but also comes dangerously close to anachronism. As Suzanne Solente writes of Christine:

le féminisme de Christine de Pizan ne dépass[e] pas les limites imposées par les usages et les idées qui avaient cours de son temps. Elle ne demand[e] pas l'égalité des sexes. Elle veut que les femmes remplissent les devoirs de leur état et de leur situation et les leur énum[ère] dans ce traité moral et social écrit à leur intention.⁵

Similarly, Carla Freccero describes Marguerite as 'one who praises women, but only in those traditional and traditionally self-sacrificing roles that have been assigned to them'.⁶

I would like now to examine in greater detail the parallels between Christine and Marguerite, restricting my field in the first instance to a comparative study of the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron*. The *Livre des Trois Vertus* will be discussed in relation to the *Heptaméron* later in this Conclusion when I come to examine the revised codes of conduct propounded for women by these women writers. At the most basic personal level, there is an obvious difference in these writers' circumstances, in that Christine de Pizan relied upon royal patronage to survive financially, whereas Marguerite de Navarre was herself a royal patron. I have noted in Chapters Three and Four that the personal status of the Queen of Navarre affects her appropriation of authority, a subject I will discuss more fully below. Both writers also introduce their extradiegetic selves into their narratives, but to different ends. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Christine's self-insertion into her narrative, a narrative reliant upon the authority of earlier texts, can be seen to validate the presence of her personal experience within the text. Marguerite's extradiegetic

⁵ Suzanne Solente, 'Christine de Pisan', *Extrait de l'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, XL (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1964), pp. 38-9.

⁶ Carla Freccero, 'Rewriting the Rhetoric of Desire in the *Heptaméron*', in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth-Century England and France*, ed. by Marie-Rose Logan and Peter L. Rudnytsky (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 298-312 (p. 298).

persona, however, because of her royal status, can be seen to validate the facticity of the tales contained in her narrative.

At the level of manifest intertextuality, both authors use works by Boccaccio, again to serve different ends. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the *Heptaméron* owes its general inception, if very little else, to the *Decameron*. This is made explicit in the Prologue, where Parlamente discusses her extradiegetic persona's intention of re-writing Boccaccio's text. That Marguerite does not, however, draw authority from the *Decameron* is made clear by the fact that she intends to revise the older text and make it 'truthful', thus undermining the validity of the earlier text. That she does not consider Boccaccio a 'serious' writer might be inferred from the narratorial comment that the field in which the *devisants* gather 'estoit si beau et plaisant qu'il avoit besoin d'un Bocace pour le depaindre'. The physical description of the *Decameron* is missing from Marguerite's text: one function of this is to focus the reader's attention upon the drama being narrated. Another, less charitable, inference one might draw is that Marguerite considers Boccaccio's reliance upon description, and therefore by extension the *Decameron* itself, as frivolous. In fact, Marguerite makes use of Boccaccio only in the Prologue, where his name is mentioned four times. This is in stark contrast to Christine's earlier *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, in which Boccaccio features prominently as her major source of manifest intertextuality. Christine uses, as was examined in Chapter Two, both the *Decameron* and *De cleres et nobles femmes*, but her explicit quotations, as noted in Chapter Four, are taken from the *Decameron* in [83a] and [158a].⁷ Where Boccaccio's name is mentioned only four times in Marguerite's text, Christine explicitly names him on at least fifteen occasions. These differences might be seen to have two primary causes, both rooted in history: firstly, from the perspective of literary history, Christine de Pizan explicitly appropriates *auctoritas* from earlier sources, in keeping with medieval tradition. As Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens state:

⁷ I omitted the use of square brackets around the tale numbers for the previous chapter in order to avoid confusion between the levels of discourse in the *Heptaméron*. In this conclusion, however, I shall re-adopt this method, inclusive of day numbers, in order to differentiate between the *Heptaméron* and the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*.

[a]lthough the Author was the originator of the work according to traditional medieval and early modern scholarship, he himself was not characterized by originality. Behind the Author stood his sources: by a largely conscious process of imitation, adaptation and quotation, the author molded his new work.⁸

Marguerite, as we have already noted, had less need to appropriate literary authority because of her extradiegetic personal authority. Secondly, Christine who, according to Natalie Zemon Davis 'introduc[ed] successfully into France certain of the literary roles developed by her Italian countrymen, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio'⁹ might be seen appropriately in an historical context to be disseminating works of the early Italian Renaissance amongst the French court. In contrast, the dislike of Italy and the Italians displayed in tale [VI, 51] of the *Heptaméron* and the historical context of France's wars with Italy during the reign of François Ier might be seen in Marguerite's rejection of Boccaccio. Other instances of manifest intertextuality shared by both Christine and Marguerite are those which mention Jean de Meung. Of these, there are numerous instances in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* but only three in the *Heptaméron* [I, 9; III, 24; III, 29]. In both texts, these references evidence a shared dislike and distrust of Jean de Meung and his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Both writers also make reference to the authors of Classical Antiquity. Christine does so far more than Marguerite with references, as noted in Chapter Four, to Aristotle, Virgil, Plato, Homer, Socrates and Seneca, whereas Marguerite mentions only Plato, Virgil and Dante. That Marguerite should name Italians as a source of authority is not problematic, even when I have posited the notion of her dislike for Italy: if we remember that her reference to Virgil and Dante [VI, 55] is spoken by Hircan, the validity of his utterance can be seen therefore to be undermined by the fact that the authority of the male storytellers' assertions about women have been exposed as

⁸ Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover & London: University of New England Press, 1989), Introduction (p. 1).

⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820, in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. by Patricia H. Labalme (New York & London: New York University Press, 1980), 153-82 (p. 158).

erroneous. Through the mouths of the Virtues, Christine quotes only from Boccaccio to reinforce her testimony, whereas Marguerite's male *devisants* quote from the *Roman de la Rose* and her female narrators refute their assertions by citing Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*. Marguerite de Navarre and Christine de Pizan can also be seen to share a concern for realism in their texts, manifested most clearly in their narrative depiction of rape. Rape was, and still is, a fact of female existence; I have examined in Chapter Four the psychoanalytical implications of the rape scenarios in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and the *Heptaméron*, but I will discuss briefly here the differences in narrative representation between these two texts. Christine does not give detailed descriptions of the rapes contained in her narrative, they simply happen, or are avoided by the suicide of the intended victim. Each actual or avoided rape is, however, inextricably linked to the theme of war (or invaders in the case of the Lombard women) and, in this, Christine can be seen to sublimate the aggression of the rape act into violent battle. Marguerite, on the other hand, narrates in detail each actual or attempted rape. In this, Marguerite's social realism is more heightened than that of Christine. As Deborah Losse states of Marguerite's narrative representation of rape that she 'sets the ideal in question and forces a reassessment of the code' by 'highlighting the disturbing psychological consequences of rape', a stance Losse describes as 'more moderate than her male counterparts'.¹⁰ Christine's social realism is reflected mainly in her use of 'sermon-exemplum' types, as noted in Chapter Two, and her questions to the Virtues about contemporary male opinion. The 'sermon-exemplum' include 'une femme' [147], 'plusieurs dames ensemble' [167], and 'une autre femme' [227], reinforced by Christine's eye-witness testimony of her neighbour [31] and Anastasia [113]. The allegorical structure of Christine's work precludes any greater degree of social realism, particularly as the majority of her examples are taken from spheres other than that of Post-Greco-Roman European History. The structure of the *Heptaméron*, however, whose tales are taken from contemporary society, actively

¹⁰ Deborah N. Losse, 'Distortion as a means of reassessment: Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the *Querelle des Femmes*', *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, 3 (1982), 74-84 (p. 75).

promotes such a degree of realism. Each tale, with the explicit exception of *nouvelle* 70, is presented as an eye-witness account and many of the devisants make much of disguising the identity of the protagonists, although this too might be seen as use of 'sermon-exemplum', in that Marguerite uses descriptors such as 'un gentil homme italien' [II, 14], 'ung riche marchand' [VI, 55], 'ung prothonotaire' [VII, 66]. Christine and Marguerite differ most strikingly in their approach to Mariolatry. The Virgin Mary is the jewel in the crown of Christine's city, her triumphant entrance the culmination of Christine's achievement. However, in the *Heptaméron*, Marguerite's Reformist tendencies are in evidence: references to Mary are few in number and all are ironic or ambiguous. The first reference to the Virgin comes in the Prologue when, of Oisille Marguerite writes 'Non qu'elle fut si supersticieuse qu'elle pensast que la glorieuse Vierge laissast la dextre de son filz' (p. 4) and later in [III, 22], the corrupt abbot has a *Salve Regina* sung after his attempted rape of Marie-Heroet. Marguerite's criticism of the abuses rife within the Gallican Church is prevalent in the *Heptaméron*, manifested in the many *nouvelles*, discussed in Chapter Three, of corrupt, lascivious and murderous men of the Church. Christine has no such agenda; only in the far later *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* does she make reference to the excessive pomp and ceremony of the Gallican Church and its split from Rome.

As to whether Christine and Marguerite write differently from men, I have shown in Chapter Four that they both write *like* men, but write *as* women. In this, they necessarily differ from their male contemporaries, who could not biologically write *as* women. Both writers work within established literary parameters, using the rhetorical devices of example and authority, making use of the 'feminist' literary technique of dialogue. In this, they do not write differently from men. As participants in the *querelle des femmes*, however, they differ from their male contemporaries in that they seek neither to condemn nor to glorify the entire female sex. By refusing to accept the existence of a universalised Woman or Man, they preclude the possibility for generalisation. By acknowledging the existence of both good and evil men and women, they create a more reasoned foundation for argument, based upon an

acknowledgment of human frailty. In this, they certainly write differently from the 'antifeminist' polemics produced by men during the *querelle des femmes*. To attempt to detect similarities of writing style common to Christine de Pizan and Marguerite de Navarre is, however, a fruitless task: where Christine's style is Latinate, Marguerite's is conversational. Both make use of dialogue with multiple voices, but in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*, Christine converses with only one of the Virtues at a time, asking politely-phrased questions and listening attentively to the response. The same can hardly be said of the animated debates which follow the narratives of the *Heptaméron*, where the *devisants* interject, interrupt and contradict one another. The stylistic similarities that Christine and Marguerite share are the literary tropes of example, authority and dialogue, and the fact that they write *like* men, writing *as* women.

By remaining within the parameters of rhetoric, these writers adopt the tool of example. They then adapt it to reject the existence of a universalised Woman and to provide a more realistic pattern of behaviour which remains largely within the canonical ideals of virtue and chastity, but which at the same time encourages women to practise active virtue in society.

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